

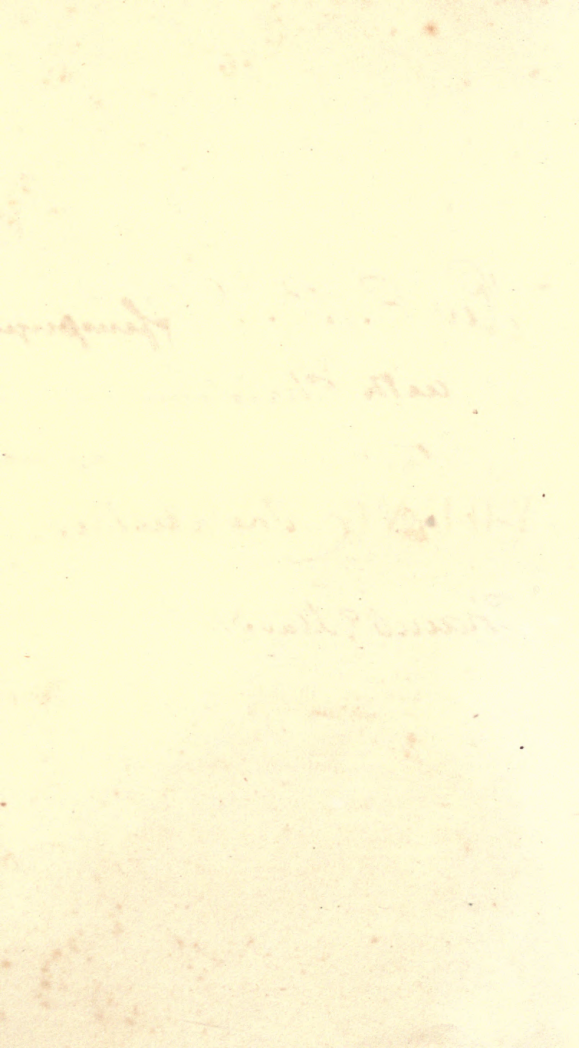
WRIGHT II # 695 FIRST EDITION.

(by Peter Seibert Davis)

Nah

Rev E. B. Rappaport
with Christian regard
of his friend & classmate
The Author.

Chaub. Mar 31 '70



T H E

Y O U N G P A R S O N .

T H E

Y O U N G P A R S O N .

"There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dream'd of in our philosophy." — *Hamlet*.

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THE YOUNG PARSON.

CHAPTER I.

THE TRIAL SERMON.

THE Rev. Petit Meagre had accepted an invitation to preach a "*trial sermon*" before the Gainfield congregation; or, in other words, had consented to visit the people for exhibition twice on Sunday, at the usual hours *for Divine service*, yclept in some places "religious exercises" and "meetin'." Due notice had been given in the town paper that he would "exercise his gift" and display himself generally; and a full and punctual attendance was requested, in order that the people might pronounce upon the man and his performance. Several other candidates for popular favor, and for the congregation's *promise* to pay two hundred and fifty dollars a year, had been there; but as Providence decided that they should not accept "the call," these simply had various places assigned them, like Dante's heroes, in

the minds of the people, only liable to be summoned forth for purposes of comparison and contrast.

It was now thought that some immediate action was required for the good of the congregation. The letter to Mr. Meagre said: "The sacred oracles have long been dumb. Zion is languishing; our church is in debt, and our people scattered like sheep without a shepherd. The ministers of our church around here say it is a shame we can't keep a minister longer. But no one ever stayed over two years since the time of old Mr. Huguenot. He built the church, you know; but he had so many funerals that bad winter, that he got the hemorrhage of the lungs right in the pulpit, which our people didn't like in him, and so we thought we had better get a stronger man."

Some one had said that Mr. Meagre was a "fust rate preacher for so young a man; would set in almost anywhere, and was always ready to take good advice;" by which it was understood that a young man whose abilities were reputed to be respectable, was willing to come *there* and do just what anybody would tell him to do. It was therefore almost a foregone conclusion with the members of the congregation that they would elect Mr. Meagre, if he was "anything like." Of this they were to be the proper judges, and an opportunity was to be afforded to them to examine the article for themselves. They could have an evidence of his existence sufficient to satisfy a St. Thomas, measure his mental calibre, gauge his orthodoxy, estimate his piety, and pronounce upon his suit-

ability for all coming time. One thing had prepos-
sessed them in his favor. A ministerial brother who
sustained some pecuniary losses among them, said upon
apparent authority that Mr. Meagre's father was rich.
He had sent his son through two colleges without a bit
of help from the Board of Education, and therefore
ought to have the privilege of supporting him as a
missionary somewhere. Besides this, Mr. Meagre, it
was said, was heir to a large fortune from his mother,
which no one else could touch; and it was argued that
"all this might be an advantage to a congregation as
bad off as this one."

Upon hearing of this, a good-humored smile played
over the face of Mr. Meagre's father, who was a little
severe upon anything that might beget self-compla-
cency in his children. "My boy," said the old
gentleman, "your parchments are the *only* evidence
I have that you have been through two colleges. We
have a calf in the barn-yard that old Jim says has
sucked two cows: it is a very big — calf. All the
cows on the plantation could not make a *lion* out of
it. I do not know but that you will be a dear bargain
for any people, even if some one else pays your ex-
penses. But if the Gainfield congregation wants you,
and you think you can do any good, say that you will
go. I have always told you that your Christian nur-
ture and education were to be your only outfit from
home, but while I have anything you shall never go
hungry nor ragged. Remember, however, that if all
your mother's children cost me as much as you have

done, instead of getting a large estate by *entail*, you will hardly have the *tail end* of an estate. God bless you, and make you humble, useful, and happy." The invitation was accordingly accepted, as already stated.

And now having accepted the invitation to preach the "trial sermon," Mr. Meagre's next duty was to go and preach it. He arrived in Gainfield on Saturday evening, was met at the cars, and carried off bag and baggage to the house of Mr. Absalom Strapiron. It was soon known that the preacher had come. The children peeped in at him through the crack of the door until those behind, in their eagerness to get a sight, pushed those before into the room, and then the whole herd scampered off as if a tribe of Indians was after them. The remarks made loud enough to be heard in the room where Mr. Meagre sat, were queer enough. While under his ancestral roof, where Mr. Meagre was not required to pay his own bills, as many a more worthy young man has to do, good clothes were so common that they never called forth a remark of any kind, except when Petit's first high hat was sent in, on which occasion one of his younger brothers said it was "so slick, that if a fly should try to alight on it, that fly would slip and break its neck." In Gainfield, however, the glossy black clothes of the young preacher fully corroborated the idea that he must be well off. Besides these, he wore patent-leather boots, and had a silk umbrella and a gold watch. A little boy who wore his father's gum shoes in dry weather, brought a pitcher of water into Mr. Meagre's room, and re-

ported to his mother afterwards that he "saw lots of things." "That man," he said, "had on a wrapper and worked slippers; his coat was on the bed, and is all lined with silk sewed like flowers. He has a gold pencil, a pearl-handled knife, and a bead purse with something yaller in it; they were all out on the stand. I picked up the purse to look at it, and he took it from me just to give me ten cents, you know, and then put it in his pocket."

At tea, the children, about a baker's dozen in all, would put a spoonful of mush to their mouths, look first at the young clergyman's feet, then at one another and snicker, till their maternal put six or eight of them through a process she called "smacking," and sent them into the kitchen till prayer time. Albeit Mr. Meagre wore his clothes as if all unconscious of the fact that they were the subject of any remark. Nothing of importance occurred during the evening, except that Mr. Strapiron tried to prevail on the new minister to "stay over Monday and visit the people. Deacon Green mout tote you round." But Mr. Meagre, though just rising twenty-two, and aware that the people did not expect to "buy a pig in a poke," felt that he had already compromised himself by coming to preach the trial sermon; so he promptly and steadily declined.

Sunday morning came. Mrs. Strapiron put on her stockings and white crape shawl, and the whole family went to the church. Mr. Meagre walked mechanically with the daughter, whereupon an old woman and two giddy girls who joined them on the way, grew face-

tious, and wondered if anything would come out of it. Up the aisle moved Mr. Meagre. The whole congregation looked towards the door as he entered the house, the choir peeped down over the gallery, and he felt that he was the observed of all observers.

The platform of the pulpit was just two feet and four inches wide, in which space an old-fashioned settee was placed, leaving room enough for a man to crowd in sidewise. The front of this noble piece of architecture was so high that Mr. Meagre could scarcely see over the top of it; but some one, in anticipation of the difficulty, had furnished an eight-by-ten glass-box for him to stand upon. This he used, holding on to the Bible-board to maintain his balance.

Now in this thing of preaching a trial sermon, a minister might take an unholy advantage of a congregation. Rev. Petit Meagre, for instance, might have committed two of Mason's best, practised them in the woods, declaimed them in such a way as to give out the idea that he was a star of pretty considerable magnitude, and thus been elected pastor before any one could say the "jackdaw struts in borrowed plumes." But Rev. Petit was conscientious, and had six sermons of his own, written perhaps, alas! too much like sophomoric orations, but thought over carefully, and prayed over earnestly; and he delivered the message contained in the one selected for that occasion, honestly, humbly, and fervently. That there were some drawbacks that day, he did not deny. His disposition to look at the ridiculous side of every-

thing haunted him like an evil genius, and it required frequent acts of self-recollection to resist it. Standing on one foot, as the narrowness of his box frequently led him to do, he longed for a perch, and a claw, and for a wing, that he might draw up the other foot under it; and as the box moved and sometimes began to tilt, he could not help reflecting on the terrible result should he pitch over the pulpit, especially as Miss Strapiron sat just where he would fall, her mouth very wide open, as if she anticipated the probability of such a result, and was prepared to swallow him — patent-leather boots, gold watch, and all. He marked with alarm that once as he was almost gone, her eyes dilated and her mouth expanded, and she seemed to rise slightly. Terror-stricken, he hung to the edge of the desk, like a drowning mariner to a rock. Such thoughts were the flies in the ointment. Besides, he felt that those before him came there not as humble worshippers, or as those anxious to learn the truth, but as critics to form an estimate of him. He was merely sitting for a daguerreotype, and the holy solemnities of his office seemed almost reduced to a farcical show.

But the “speakin’ was fust rate.” This was the opinion not only of the members, but of others who heard it. Old Brother Surcingle of a “sister denomination” was there that day. His own pastor had preached from notes the Sunday before — the only time he ever did it, to be sure, but Brother Surcingle was seeking a place where it was *never* done.

As he was very near-sighted, and Mr. Meagre did not display his manuscript very palpably, it was concluded that Mr. Meagre had none. Satisfied upon this point, Brother Surcingle went to sleep, and awoke when the congregation arose to prayer, greatly refreshed *by the sermon*,—of course. The young brother had made a “powerful effort.” Brother Surcingle even waited till he came from the pulpit, to be introduced to him, complimented him, and hoped he would lend a listening ear to the Macedonian cry. “If only we had such a preacher. I tell you what!” and here he gave a w’-h-e-w that fell little short of a long, loud whistle.

Now, as Brother Surcingle’s pastor was the best preacher in the State; so faithful and beloved, that he had been gradually emptying some of the other churches in the town, these expressions were thought to indicate great expectations as to what Mr. Meagre would do. Chrysostom was to be out-Chrysostomed, and the “largest bear in the country” was to be displaced by a still “lager beer.”

The young brother’s determination to leave early on the next morning had probably been announced; for as he followed the congregation out of the church, the choir struck up that eminently churchly tune:

“I’m a pilgrim, I’m a stranger,
I can tarry, I can tarry but a night.”

When old Brother Huguenot heard of this, he said: “That congregation always had nice ideas of propriety. Once when I entered the church to begin the

morning service, the choir struck up the well-known 'Dismission Hymn' to the tune of 'Days of Absence.' However, Brother Meagre, as there is to be an election next week, you may have an opportunity hereafter to see more of the little flock."

CHAPTER II.

THE ELECTION OF A PASTOR.

THE Gainfield congregation having determined to hold a meeting "to elect a pastor," Rev. Mr. Huguenot, who had a neighboring church, and who felt an interest in the Gainfield people although they had treated him badly, was invited to be present, and see that all things went rightly. Electing pastors was not an uncommon thing with the flock at that place, but it had a knack of doing everything in the wrong way; and the Synod had threatened to interpose with its authority unless more regard was paid to the rules of the Church. To Mr. Huguenot, therefore, was assigned the duty of Major-General, to direct the affairs of the meeting.

The people had assembled "according to appointment," and Mr. Huguenot told a young deacon to move that old Mr. Holland, the elder, take the chair; to which Mr. Holland replied, "I can set jest as good on the bench, like on the cheer;" but upon being

made acquainted with the dignity conferred upon him, he assumed it with an air that no one can appreciate without knowing the man. A resolution was then offered, to go into an election for a pastor.

"Put the motion," said Mr. Huguenot to Mr. Holland.

"Poot it yourself, can't you?" said Mr. Holland.

"Yes, sir, but you are the chairman."

"Well! ain't you a breacher?" asked the president, triumphantly. History has not recorded Mr. Huguenot's reply, but he succeeded in obtaining an affirmative vote on the question, perhaps without getting Mr. Holland to understand fully the prerogatives and duties of his office.

The licentiate, Rev. Petit Meagre, was then put in nomination, and an opportunity afforded for remarks. There was silence for the space of five minutes, although several persons present evidently had something weighty on their minds. Miss Smartley whispered to her friend, that she hoped Mr. Meagre would be elected; her cousin went to the same seminary, and he said of all the licenshes who left this year, Mr. Meagre was the best. Old Mr. Huggermugger addressed the meeting first, without rising from his seat. He said, "Some of the Episcopalals say that this Meagre is purty much for high church. For my part I think the church is high enough. It's no use to finish that steeple. I think all them bad steps out front of the meetin' house make my rumatiz worse; but my old woman says the school-house down stairs ought to

be cleaned. I go against a high church, and want the Sunday-school whitewashed."

Here Mr. Strapiron arose. "The new minister's hands don't look as if he had ever worked much, and his kid gloves are just like a girl's." He was about to enlarge on this general subject, when a look from his wife, that seemed to be a reminder, brought him to a halt. It appears that Mr. Strapiron had been a convert to something of the kind himself once in his life. When his third wife died he denounced black cotton, and declined a hearse to go a mile, on the ground that such things "gendered to pride." But six weeks afterwards, when he married the present Mrs. Strapiron, who was thirty years his junior, he wore kids himself, and brought her home in a carriage, although the distance was only three squares. Mr. Strapiron was aware that these things had gained him notoriety, and was willing to drop the subject in hand, only remarking, as he took his seat, that he had seen the folly of some things, and quoting Paul as saying, "When I was a child I *acted* like a child, but when I became a man I put away childish things." Gossip said Mr. Strapiron became a child every time he became a widower.

Mrs. Wiggleton, of Turnip Hill, thought the new preacher was too young. "He don't look older than our Americus, and *he* won't be nineteen 'till next hay-making. A body will feel strange to see such a little man in the pulpit when we have had such a big one;" and here Mrs. Wiggleton shed a tear in remembrance

of Rev. Millard Jacobs, whom she helped to starve out, and for whom she now so tenderly sighed. Now Mr. Meagre had been told of his smallness of stature several times during his short visit to Gainfield, and once said, in self-defence, that he was probably about the size of St. Paul. This remark was used by Deacon Green in answer to Mrs. Wiggleton; and as it did not occur to the congregation that "a contemptible bodily presence" was the *only* point of resemblance between Mr. Meagre and the apostle, they expressed themselves as perfectly satisfied.

Meanwhile Mr. Teasil and old Mrs. Graves had so far misapprehended the object of the meeting as to get into a discussion of the *Doctrine of Election* in the side aisle to the right of the pulpit, and by this time had become decidedly noisy. The old lady heaped upon her opponent some very severe epithets in a loud voice, and Mr. Huguenot as an advisory member insisted that the president should preserve order. But Mr. Holland simply drew himself up in his seat and said: "If dose two old beples aint got de sense to pehave, I won't have nuttin to do mit em." The disputants subsided, however, finally of their own accord, and the way was opened for further remarks.

At this point Mr. Strapiron made his second speech. "Brethren," he said, "this is a solemn matter before us. Our hearts ought to be right and our motives pure. All hidden wickedness will be made manifest soon enough. I think we ought to pick on Mr. Meagre as our pastor. When he was here he stayed at my

house, and I think he is blessed with enough and to spare of this world's goods. I did not say much to him about this; but I did not offer to pay his expenses up here, and he had not the face to ask it. That speaks for itself. And then he had letters to introduce him to some of the richest men in this town, the real aristocracy. I don't know but what he is some kin to them, and if he comes they might pay considerable of the salary."

This argument had a thrilling effect. Mr. John Crimp arose, and said he was now "convinced" that Mr. Meagre would be the "cheapest man" they could get. He would like to "come to a vote," but he had not heard the new schoolmaster say anything yet.

That gentleman, thus called out, remarked: "I do not wish to have anything to do with it. The congregation might be divided, and it would hurt my business to take sides. I expect to vote *non-liquet*."

"Ya, ya," cried old Mr. Krime, "dat is zo. Dat breacher is broud. His hair vos barded; he breach for gelt; I too votes not like it."

With these exceptions, the election was unanimous. Rev. Mr. Huguenot made a speech at the close, which was said, by a looker-on in Venice, to have been rich beyond description. Some of the congregation, who understood parts of it, got angry at him and refused to pay a note they had given him some years before. Many, however, did not understand him, and took his irony for compliment. He said that after the "*trial sermon*" he had no doubt the congregation would

“pick on” Mr. Meagre as their pastor, even as they had picked on several before; agreed with Brother Strapiron that “men’s motives could not remain hidden long;” had no doubt that Mr. Meagre was influenced by sordid considerations, but that if he had friends here, would be the “cheapest man” in town; encouraged the brethren to believe that their new minister would not wear kid gloves long. Mr. Huguenot had no idea that Mr. Meagre’s high church tendencies would lead to any important changes. These walls he said have been permitted to sink several inches, and he would undertake to say that not a brick would be added to the unfinished tower. He had been of Mrs. Huggermugger’s opinion in regard to cleaning the basement, for ten years.

After reviewing the proceedings in this way, he tried to reason with the people, to remove their ignorance and prejudices, to elevate their ideas, and closed with an appeal, as much distinguished for its pathos as his first words had been for their severity. But this he had tried before, through long years, and now he prayed that Mr. Meagre might be more successful than he had been.

CHAPTER III.

THE YOUNG PARSON "GITS SETTLED" AND IS
INTRODUCED TO THE PEOPLE.

HAVING received and accepted a call to the pastorate of the Gainfield Charge, Rev. Petit Meagre lost no time in repairing to his field of labor. Not only the Gainfield Gazette, but the general church papers noticed the fact, and said, of course, that the young brother entered upon his duties with "rare prospects of usefulness and success."

The expected arrival of the new preacher had given some anxiety to the elder ladies of the church. They were deeply exercised to know where he ought to room, and board, and have his washing done. Several families declined taking him before they were asked to take him; and others intimated, with a knowing toss of the head, that anything they might do in this way would depend on circumstances. Mr. Meagre cut the knot by taking these things entirely into his own hands. He got a fine second-story room on a corner, — a room over which no member of the congregation ever had the least possible control. He also engaged "provender" at a regular boarding-house, and sent his "wash" to a laundry. Upon the whole, these domestic arrangements — if there is such

a thing as domesticity in bachelordom — proved to be the best that could have been made. No one in the congregation knew how late he studied at night, or how late he slept in the morning; what he ate, or how frequently he changed his linen. His room, although in a central location, and accessible to his friends, was strictly private. At the boarding-house there were many pleasant people, and except that Mr. Meagre was betrayed into two slight skirmishes with the landlady, he had nothing to complain of in these respects. And lest it might be supposed that these difficulties were of a serious nature, it may be well to state the facts connected with them, and thus forever relieve all apprehension.

The first offence was given in this simple way. Mr. Meagre never drank anything except water at his meals, but was so intemperate in the use of *that*, that it was thought to be an economy of time and labor to keep a pitcher near his place at the table. One evening he was filling his glass, and old Mrs. Tuber, the aforesaid landlady, who was a sort of Mrs. Partington, had her hand on the tea-urn. The forces thus disposed, Mrs. Tuber broke a five minutes' silence by asking Mr. Meagre a sort of conundrum which she had read in the paper, and thought to give a personal application by adapting it to circumstances.

“Mr. Meagre, what is the difference between you and me?”

“I don't know, madam, except that while I *dish out pure water* you *pour out dish-water*.”

This raised a loud laugh, at which Mr. Meagre was really surprised, for as he never tasted the beverage Mrs. Tuber dispensed, he did not know that his epithet had ever been applied to it. It appeared, however, that dish-water was the name commonly given to it, and the boarders were disposed to pass a vote of thanks to the young preacher for giving the old lady the hint; but she, perhaps, never loved him any the better for it. Of course, Mr. Meagre made the necessary explanations, and having disavowed any ungentlemanly desire to wound any one's feelings, his disclaimer was taken as ending the matter.

On the other occasion, Mrs. Tuber attempted to lecture Mr. Meagre for his irregularity in coming to his meals. Now his professional engagements sometimes stood in the way of compliance with the rules of the house. He could not leave a funeral train on the street because the dinner-bell was ringing, nor always quit the couch of the dying when the finger on the dial indicated that it was tea time. And then, whether the congregation knew it or not, Mr. Meagre *did* sleep a little late on Monday mornings; and to be candid, it was one of these lie-a-bed sins that unloosed the old lady's tongue.

But Mr. Meagre told her that as she never took the trouble to keep the rolls hot, and even sent him breakfastless away when he came too late, *he suffered all the inconvenience himself*, and did not think he ought to have the additional punishment of a scolding. He was willing to bear one penalty, but not both, and

Mrs. Tuber might choose which to inflict. As it was easier for a corpulent person to keep silent than to warm a beefsteak, Mrs. Tuber ceased to chide, and there was no further difficulty.

In addition to the Gainfield congregation, Mr. Meagre had two other "preaching places," as they were called. The one was a few miles out of town, and the other at Pumbeditha, twenty miles away. As he could go to the first of these and return the same day, it was not necessary for him to make any arrangements in regard to boarding and lodging. He never stayed over night, and seldom accepted an invitation to tea. In order to get to Pumbeditha, however, he must needs go to a certain station on the railroad, where he was generally met by Mr. Middleton, and taken to the village in a sort of "carry-all," which Mr. Meagre named "The Diligence," and in which he had many pleasant rides.

Mr. Middleton was by far the best man Mr. Meagre had among his members, and his wife was a most excellent woman. Their house had been a sort of hotel for all the ministers of the denomination for years,—only no minister ever had a bill to pay. The pastors who had labored there all regarded it as a green spot in the desert, and Mr. Meagre took to it instinctively, as a duck takes to water. He had much to do in the congregation at Pumbeditha, and usually stayed several days at a time. Mr. Middleton's was then his home—the point of departure whence he visited the people; and by that hearthstone he often

smoked a cigar, talked, and even laughed, without the fear of bringing scandal upon his profession.

Nearly every one of the people of the congregation knew Mr. Meagre by sight at least, when he returned to Gainfield; and strangely enough, they expected him to know every one of them. Now if any single one of them had preached a trial sermon to him, he doubtless would have remembered that person, but he did not know the two hundred to whom he had simply preached a trial sermon.

In order that he might correct this evil, and know every man, woman, and child, Deacon Green was appointed to "tote him round and introduce him." This work was to have been commenced on Monday, but as Mr. Meagre had once heard that Monday was universal wash-day, the pleasure of visiting the people was postponed until Tuesday. The women, however, concluded that the young preacher would not think so far; so they put their washing off until Tuesday, and when Mr. Meagre came on that day, he found many of them at their tubs. Mrs. McAndlish apologized and "took on about it," as if washing clothes was a mortal sin, of which any woman ought to be ashamed. In vain did Mr. Meagre say it was no crime. Mrs. McAndlish had Spartan ideas. It was no sin to wash perhaps, but a dreadful one to be *caught* washing. The young parson sympathized with the embarrassment the woman labored under; and while he proclaimed that it was the part of a Christian to perform aright the humblest duty, and honored those who did

so, he jotted down as a thing to be remembered forever in his pastoral labors: *Tuesday is a wash-day; don't call on anybody.*

As Mr. Meagre forgot that he had put the week out of joint, he just made a mistake in the day, and having got that "right wrong," he visited Mrs. McAndlish the next time on Monday, and found her washing again. She managed to correct his calender, and almost extorted a promise that he would "*always* make some other time suit his convenience."

The people generally seemed glad to see Mr. Meagre, though some of them were needlessly flustered when he came upon them unawares. He did not take them all by surprise, however. On Turnip Hill, where nearly a whole square belonged to his bailiwick, a girl who was scrubbing the pavement suddenly espied him coming, and dropping broom, bucket, and house-cloth, ran to give the alarm. Perhaps there were no signal fires kindled such as the Greeks lighted to announce the fall of Troy, but there was a calling over garden fences, and a running through back yards, that indicated a spread of news; and after leaving the first house, Mr. Meagre was not obliged to tap more than once at a front door. Time had been given to every woman to put on a clean apron, open her parlor shutters, and instruct her children how to behave. The commands given to the little ones were, that they should neither smile nor move a muscle, but keep perfectly still, "just like in meeting," until the preacher went away.

The general ideas which the children took from these commands were, that the new preacher was to be the tyrant of their infancy; that religion was harsh and forbidding; and that they might do behind a minister's back what they dare not do before his face — another piece of Spartan morality that had been inculcated, perhaps for years. The result was that the youth of the congregation, instead of looking upon their pastor as a kind, approachable man, anxious to do them good, had a sort of instinctive aversion to him. The effect of some such teaching was patent enough to Mr. Meagre. For although he was not a very "solemncholy" man, yet for a long time the young people studiously avoided him, and if they came upon him unexpectedly,

"All shrank, like boys who unaware
Ranging the woods to start a hare
Come to the mouth of the dark lair
Where growling low, a fierce old bear
Lies amidst bones and blood!"

Some very queer things occurred in these first visits; things of such a nature that they cannot be recorded here, and would scarcely be credited if they were recorded. They must, therefore, be omitted.

It may be harmless to state, however, that Mr. Meagre's youthful appearance was a subject of universal remark. "How old are you?" boldly asked one scared-up, iron-visaged woman, the only time she opened her mouth while Mr. Meagre was in her house.

"Is this now the preacher?" said one in another

place; "I didn't git to meetin', but they all told me I never seen sich a short preacher. Are you healt'y? Some of the preachers are so scandalous sickly, they ain't good for nothin'. Spec you've got good larnin' tho'. Let's see! Meagre is your name. There was one Meagre got killed out at Poltz's, with a thrashin' machine. 'Rec'on it wasn't you, was it?"

"Same man," Mr. Meagre was strongly disposed to say, and stick to it with the pertinacity of a Jew pedlar, but his better nature triumphed, and he candidly acknowledged that he was altogether a different person.

At one house, a stout, middle-aged woman who wore spectacles, bustled in. She was a Methodist, but had a curiosity to see the new preacher, and came ostensibly on important business.

"Miss Storm," she said, "I just come to ax you a perticler question. Is it bad luck to set a hen on odd eggs? Bin trubbled 'bout it more 'an a week, and says I to Cythy, says I, 'I'll just go and ax Miss Storm.'"

Mrs. Storm gave her sage opinion, and the lady visitor having taken a good look at the object of her curiosity, departed, saying she was in a dreadful hurry, "Cythy run out o' bread, she's bakin' and her baby's cryin'. Think that child ought to have some catnip."

Mr. Meagre's first visit to old Mr. Krime impressed the young pastor very sadly; although if the old man had not exhibited such utter depravity and hardness of heart, the interview would have been laughable

enough. Some strange things were expected. Mr. Krime was over eighty years of age. He had perhaps from his very youth opposed everything in the way of religion, and the disposition to do so had become a constitutional habit. He had the fixed posture of mind and heart of one who feared that some of God's people would exercise an influence over him and take advantage of him. His specialty was hatred to ministers of the Gospel. Some years before, a good Methodist brother had tried to approach him kindly, and only received words of cursing for his pains. Since that time missionary operations had been suspended. Of course Mr. Krime never attended public worship. He had not even seen Mr. Meagre when that functionary came to preach his trial sermon; but some one had told the old man that the minister's hair was "barded," and he knew he was "brouded." Although an outsider, Mr. Krime had gone to the congregational meeting at Gainfield, as he himself said, to "shust let de beobles know vat I tinks. I not likes de breacher to kom any more to dis place."

But Mrs. Krime, a healthy-looking woman of about forty years, desired Mr. Meagre to come and see the old man. "He is a little plain-spoken like," she said, "but you musn't mind him. I'll make an excuse to keep the dogs tied that day."

Of course Mr. Meagre thought it his duty to go. The old man was more stern than Cedric the Saxon: he did not advance even three steps to meet his guest, but sat still. This was excusable enough, as he was

very old ; but the monosyllabic sound that he uttered when made aware that a preacher had ventured into his presence — a sound something between a grunt and a groan, was highly expressive of contempt and defiance.

Mr. Meagre talked with Mrs. Krime until the old man turned upon him with a leer and asked,

“Any sin to go fur jarries on Zunday?”

Mrs. Krime explained that he meant cherries.

“Ya, jarries — any sin to go fur jarries on Zunday?”

“Yes, sir,” said Mr. Meagre, emphatically.

“Zo? De breachers do worse dings as go fur jarries. Dey breach von blace und den quick shump on, und ride so hard like dey kin, to breach anoder blace, shist to make de monish ; und de breachers all go in ——” here Mr. Krime pointed downwards, and used a monosyllable which more than implied a doubt as to ministers getting to *heaven*.

Mr. Meagre preserved his gravity. There was nothing to try his temper, however much there might have been to excite his pity or provoke his mirth. He gave Mr. Krime a lecture that was plain enough to be understood, and expected to be rewarded by a caning, but the old man seemed rather pleased with the candor the young preacher displayed, and grew more amiable and sociable. Among other things, he gave an account of the way he had punished some boys whom he caught stealing his peaches, which was funny enough ; and his triumph in the event referred

to, seemed to linger in his mind as one of the most pleasing recollections of his long life.

When the young parson arose to leave he was advised by the old man to "Shust ride tro de woods a little und scape de doll-gate," which operation Mr. Meagre objected to on high moral grounds, at which Mr. Krime was surprised. What was the object in giving this advice was never fully known. Mr. Meagre thought it was intended to test his principles, or perhaps save his purse ; but he afterwards learned that the old gentleman had once been fined five dollars for a little ride that he himself had taken around the toll-gate, and it was half feared that there was a covert attempt to get somebody else into the same scrape.

CHAPTER IV.

HARD WORK.

REV. Petit Meagre entered upon his labors with all the ardor of his first love. Before he was old enough to be ordained he had a sort of vicarage in a city congregation, but here was a charge that the church had committed to his own care. A sense of his responsibility almost overwhelmed him, and he resolved by grace to do all in his power to take care of the interests intrusted to him. There was around him in

other congregations a great deal of refined society, to which respectability was a passport ; but he resolved to deny himself the pleasure thus offered him, and identify himself as far as possible with his own people. He knew that they had peculiarities ; that they were generally ignorant and illiberal ; but this only constituted a reason why he should put forth greater effort, and never did young man throw his energies more fully into the work before him.

His anxiety to know every one to whom he owed a duty, and the expectation that he should know every one, now that Deacon Green had "toted him round," sometimes embarrassed the young parson sadly. The first week he was in Gainfield he passed some of his most prominent members without recognizing them, and this was thought very strange. Afterwards he would bow and bob indiscriminately to every person he met, sometimes to strangers who were just passing through the town, and once to a lady whom he had never seen, and who thought him to be either near-sighted, or else a booby. In every congregation, there are some persons whom a new preacher is apt to confound with others ; and this betrayed Mr. Meagre into anxiously asking a young lady of whose identity he was certain, how her mother was ; to which said young lady replied, that her mother had been dead for ten years. On another occasion he politely inquired of an old maid, when she looked for her husband ; and confused by her tart reply, explained, that he mistook her for Mrs. Porwiggles, whose hus-

band had left the town the week before with one of his grandsons, to see after a pension to which he was entitled, as a soldier of the war of 1812. From that unhappy hour Miss Languish treated Mr. Meagre with the most ferocious disdain, especially insisting that he "had horrid goggle eyes, just like a toad, you know; that he squinted fearfully, and must be going stone blind." Of course he had to resort to every device consistent with sound morality to find out who people were, without directly asking them their names. Ignorance on *that* point would have so offended their vanity, that they would not have recovered from it for years. However, he soon learned to know the material he had to work upon.

Like many ardent, but inexperienced young clergymen, Mr. Meagre commenced by doing too much. His one hundred members were scattered in almost as many families; yet he visited and prayed with them all on an average of once a month. In this, Rev. Petit exactly overdid the matter; for when circumstances arose which *prevented* him from doing this, it was set down as a falling off, not only in his interest, but in his piety. At home, he had been taught always to discriminate in favor of the poor and the sick. This he always did; but sometimes the sick required all of his time, and then those who were well made no abatement for the fact that they did not need his services, and that he was not ubiquitous. Once he had promised to call at a certain place at an appointed hour; some neighbor's chickens had scratched up an

old lady's peas, and her son had denounced the chickens in the most savage manner, and threatened to shoot them, and thus created bad blood. As the parties all belonged to the church, each one threatened to tell the preacher, and each was anxious to give him the true version of the affair before the others had an opportunity to poison his mind. Like a faithful pastor, Mr. Meagre set out to pour oil on the troubled waters. On the way, however, he met a messenger who announced that Joe Smith was dying on Turnip-Hill, and wished to see him immediately. Of course the preacher turned about and went to see the dying man. Here he was detained till a late hour in the night, when the poor man died. But this did not excuse Mr. Meagre for not attending upon the parishioners who had the quarrel about the chickens. Both parties became reconciled in their condemnation of him, and threatened to leave the church. They did not see the use of having a pastor who could not come to see them and comfort them in their trouble.

To Mr. Meagre this all seemed providential, as the parties would, perhaps, not have become reconciled if he had been able to carry out his first intention of visiting them. The comfort they expected was to be given only by his taking sides in their quarrel, something which he would not have done at any rate. As for leaving the church, why — they did not leave, although, if he could have felt sure that the church did them as little good as they did the church, he would have regarded their not leaving as an offset in the

estimate of the good resulting from his failure to see them.

In preparing for the pulpit, the Rev. Petit labored about as much as young preachers generally do. He often got "darkly, deeply, beautifully blue" as the week waned; for the idea of going into the pulpit, not because he had anything to say, but because it was expected that he would say something at 11 o'clock on Sunday, was sad enough. Often in his Saturday night agonies did he resolve to commence his preparation early the next week, and save all of this perturbation of mind. Rev. Walter Corneel, in the town—as good a man as could be found anywhere, and an able, fearless preacher—was never in the drag. He commenced on Monday morning, had a certain quantity of his discourse written at a certain hour every week, and always had Saturday free to himself. Why might not Mr. Meagre do the same thing? He tried it once; shut himself up and beat around for an idea for several days, but found himself at noon on Friday, sans sermon, sans text, reading an advertisement in an old paper upside down. Finally, in a fit of desperation he took a subject arbitrarily, treated it mechanically, and brought to the pulpit as complete an opiate as was ever administered to a congregation.

It was evidently a failure. There was a difference in the men,—a difference not only in the calibre, but in the native structure of their minds. Mr. Corneel was constitutionally systematic; Mr. Meagre could do nothing except under the spur of special necessity.

So the young man tried to be true to his own nature, rather than to imitate those whom he envied or admired. He studied hard to improve his mind and increase his knowledge, but prepared his sermons when he could get into sympathy with his subject. Of course he continued to have his mighty wrestlings on Saturday nights, and his nervous reactions on Monday morning, but *to him* these were the least of two sets of evils.

Once, and perhaps only once, did Mr. Meagre get a sermon done by the middle of the week, but then the text had flashed into his mind as if he were suddenly illumined, and he laid the whole subject out on paper in two hours and a half. But even in that case he had the wind taken out of his sails before he had got fairly out of harbor. Dr. Kay, Mr. Surcingle's pastor, was not only worthy of the reputation he had as a scholar and a preacher, but was a very genial man, and Mr. Meagre's best friend. He not only gave him access to his fine library, but taught him how to use it; visited him, walked with him, talked with him, relieved his *ennui*, and instructed his ignorance, until the young man was more indebted to him than to any one else, except perhaps to his revered teacher at the seminary. The card that Dr. Kay usually left when he found that his son Timothy was out, was not a piece of enamelled paste-board with "Rev. Theophilus Kay, D. D." engraved upon it, but a chair placed upon the study table and surmounted by a pair of dumb-bells. Of course the

terms of intimacy justified candid criticism ; and when in this case the youngster boasted that his sermon was done, Dr. Kay asked the text, and without hearing anything more than the text, ventured the positive opinion that Mr. Meagre had perverted it. The sermon was read, and the subject investigated on the spot. Dr. Kay's prediction was fully verified, so that even the luckless young interpreter, who supposed that he had reached the meaning of inspiration by a special inspiration of his own, saw that he was utterly mistaken. As Mr. Meagre was conscientious, he had to take his beautiful Mosaic apart, and frame it all anew, which brought his work as near to Sunday as usual.

This event taught the Rev. Petit never to write a sermon or a text before he at least *tried* to examine the subject. The subsequent history of that same sermon made him aware of the attention with which his hearers listened to what he said in the pulpit. He preached it that Sunday, and however correct it was theologically, no one seemed to be interested in it. About four weeks afterwards, for good and sufficient reasons, Mr. Meagre deliberately resolved to repeat it. He did so, and with "thrilling effect." The people said their minister "never preached such a good sermon in all his born days." One man asked him why he did not always prepare such discourses, and Mr. Meagre took him aback by assuring him that that identical sermon, *verbatim et literatim*, had been almost thundered into the ears of the congrega-

tion just one month before. The "dear hearers" were wonderfully "taken down," and some of them came to church afterwards mainly to see if the parson would not preach some of his old sermons over again. They concluded that he had "upset the barrel," and they were in no humor to be deceived again. Their suspicions once aroused, they were always accusing him of repetition, — a charge entirely groundless, as Mr. Meagre did not think he had any sermons worth repeating.

He continued as he had commenced, laboring hard not only as a pastor, but as a preacher; always anxious to give his hearers the best that he could furnish, but with mournful misgivings that his best was bad enough,—a view to which he may have been impelled by his modesty, but more probably by the stern evidence in the case.

CHAPTER V.

THE TWO HOLIDAYS.

ONLY twice in four long years did the youthful pastor gain any respite from these arduous labors, and in both cases the circumstances were very peculiar. Once there were several cases of small-pox in the town. The physicians had detailed Mr. Meagre from the corps of pastors to attend them, but to avoid

panic this was kept quiet; and to prevent the disease from spreading, it was suggested that the young functionary of the church should not circulate too freely. This cessation of pastoral work gave rise to complaint, of which Dr. Shady, a sort of Abernethy, heard. He humorously exaggerated the danger, now that the danger was past; and the people became suddenly very considerate and liberal. Mr. Meagre was very excusable—no use for a man to kill himself. Indeed, the young preacher seldom got into a house for the next three months, when he did call; and many of the people crossed over to the other side of the pavement, or made a call at some house hard by, when they saw him coming up the street, for fear he might think it his duty to stop them, shake hands, and apologize. They even instructed their children not to go near Mr. Meagre, as “he had somethin’ catchin’.” Among a few of them there was some talk of getting another man, who could visit them without bringing contagion with him. The truth was, the complainants did not care much about Mr. Meagre’s visits at any time; they would really have liked it better if he had never visited them, apart from the fact that they wanted a great deal of personal attention paid to them. For true pastoral visits they cared nothing.

Amid the complainers, however, there was one lady renowned in days of old for her constant murmuring that the minister did not call often enough, but who, in Mr. Meagre’s trial, to the astonishment of himself and of everybody else, was perfectly satisfied — had

not a word of complaint. She told everybody in the church whose ear she could get, that Mr. Meagre was always visiting their house; that the "dear little man," as she styled him, took at least half his meals with her, and came to her for advice about everything. "Poor little darling," she would say, "he just comes to me as if I was his mother." The result was that all the rest envied Mrs. Popple, and denounced Mr. Meagre, who, in fact, visited Mrs. Popple no oftener than he did others, and who quietly ignored the very foolish advice which she sometimes officiously forced upon him.

The other occasion on which the people granted their pastor a furlough, reminded him of the carpenter who cured his own bacon, and told his apprentice boys they might take holiday one Saturday evening and hang up the meat.

The young incumbent once preached a sermon on the text "It is more blessed to give than to receive," wherein he expatiated earnestly upon the advantages of liberality. This discourse produced a profound sensation. The prominent male members of the congregation looked sagely and approvingly at one another during the delivery, and but for the respect in which the place was held, the young man would doubtless have "brought down the house." After the service some of the officers shook hands with one another and spoke as pleasantly as if they had not met for years, although they had enjoyed a long talk just before "church tuck in." When Rev. Petit came

down from the pulpit, they congratulated him upon his "eloquent and convincing remarks," and even showed a disposition to pat him on the shoulder, but perhaps doubted whether he would like the familiarity.

"You're our man," said one, with a complimentary nod.

"That sarmont *told*," said another.

"Yes," chimed in Mr. Smith, who was counting the cents taken up at the collection, "if we'd a had some one to talk *that* way for us, we'd a bin out of debt long ago. Them other fellers we had here before you come wasn't worth nothin'."

This reflection upon his worthy predecessors was very distasteful to Mr. Meagre. But independent of that, he was glad to think that a sermon he had almost feared to preach, had done some good. Nay, he might have been tempted to take some credit to himself, had not a general warning once given to him come like a good angel to his rescue.

One of the most gifted orators in the Methodist Episcopal Church—a man to whom the young parson was indebted for many pleasant and profitable hours, said to him once, early in his ministry: "Meagre, you have started out to preach the everlasting Gospel, have you not?"

"Yes, sir," was the grave reply.

"Well, I have a word or two for you. You have doubtless heard of the eminent divine who, upon being told that he had preached a good sermon, replied that the Devil had told him that before he left the pulpit.

What I was going to say in connection with that is, that there is no place Satan is more apt to stand than by a man's side in the sacred desk, and at the foot of the pulpit stairs. If you are ever disposed to think that you have made an especially "fine effort," close your heart and stop your ears. The first hour after your discourse is done, is especially fraught with danger. Ah! how sweetly the syren sings, and how open men are to damning flattery. Go to your closet, and with a standard of purity not less high than Heaven's own before you, exercise a rigid censorship over your work; and if you find any reason for self-glorification, you are to be pitied. One of the most God-fearing, eloquent, and successful bishops in our Church would not allow any one to speak to him about his sermons on the same day they were preached."

The inexperienced young man remembered this, and concluded to suspend his judgment. That evening, however, he was requested to call a meeting of the vestry "to take into consideration the debt on the church;" and also to announce that a plan had been devised that might be expected to liquidate the whole four hundred dollars.

This request was complied with, and at the appointed time the vestry met. "Pastor *ex-officio* president in the chair; every member present punctually," the minutes said, and it may be added that every face was wreathed with smiles.

After the session was opened, Mr. Strapiron, eager

for the pleasant duty, announced the plan that had been formed for the relief of the church.

"Mr. President," he said, "it is wonderful what a remarkable co-hincidence of great minds there is sometimes. Zealous in the good work in the Master's vineyard, we had been con-cocting for a week how to pay off the claims due to one or two of us from the church, and had jist lit on an idee when your most wonderful discourse jist clinched the nail on the head, and settled us in the opinion that the children of Zion had an immediate work to perform. Now," he added, with a look that seemed to bespeak an agreeable surprise for his pastor, "we are going to give you vacation for two weeks, and get you to go and collect the money."

The Rev. Petit collapsed. He had expected to see the brethren put their hands into their pockets and pay the debt; but his Iearian wings were melted at once, and the fall completely buried him in the mire. He protested, argued, refused. But the resolution to grant him a holiday for the afore-named purpose prevailed by a large majority; only one or two out of the eight councilmen showing any compunction about imposing a duty upon their pastor which his soul seemed to abhor.

The arguments in favor of carrying out the plan had been irresistible, and some of them were evidently framed with a view to a soft spot supposed to be on the "gifted young clergyman's" head. "No use to work yourself to death here without a bit of recrea-

tion." "Nobody'll know what a good speaker we've got. You ought to be known throughout the Church; so go forth and let your light shine." "Besides, you'll succeed. Jist give em that sarmont you preached yisterday, and show the people how much more blessed it will be for them to give than for us to receive. Who wouldn't sooner be a benefactor than a beggar?"

To all of this there was no sufficient reply. Mr. Meagre himself couldn't undo his Sunday's work. So, after passing an additional resolution granting the esteemed pastor the privilege of fixing up the church provided it did not tax the members of the congregation, and noting that he had said he would sooner help to pay a sexton himself than have such a dirty church — thus expressing unbounded confidence in whatever he would undertake, and recognizing his willingness to do his part in every good work — the vestry adjourned.

The next week the well-dressed, neatly-gloved young parson started out with his tightly-rolled silk umbrella done up in a glazed cover. He knew he would have use for that defensive weapon even if it did not rain, for the weather was intolerably hot, and all the first day it was a comfort to him, for he sucked the ivory handle, or punched the floor of the car with the other end of it incessantly.

Where to go he did not know. But there was "no pent up Utica" for him. He could go where he pleased only so he got "the tin."

He tried to get himself into sympathy with the work before him; to forget all that he had heard in the vestry meeting, and remember only that his church was in debt. Perhaps, after all, his people had contributed largely in times past, and relief would encourage them. The point for which he was to ask help was an important one. He felt that, for his whole soul was absorbed in the success of his mission there. In the course of his travels he met two or three of his classmates, ardent young ministers like himself, who were out on the same kind of an errand, and was astonished,—utterly surprised, to hear them say that such places as Bristol, Madison, and Watertown were fields of more promise than Gainfield, and therefore had more claims to consideration. Indeed the young parson thought it strange, at last, that everybody did not see things just as he saw them. He had lashed himself into an idea that there ought to be a general awakening throughout the Church upon the subject. How easy it would be to raise the small amount that hung like an incubus over the congregation to which he ministered!

He told his doleful yarn to several of the older brethren in large and influential churches, and innocently thought that it was a matter of mere will with them to help him or not. One old man, a Mr. Lichter, teased him awfully; “No use to grease a fat goose’s back,” he said. “Here you are, Meagre, dressed ever so finely and eat the best of roast beef, while I have to put up with sauer-kraut and spec.”

"But, Brother Lichter," replied the young parson, "would you not sooner eat kraut and spec than anything else?"

"I believe I would," was the reply.

"Then don't make out that you are a martyr, but just help me along," said the Gainfield agent.

"Well, Meagre," said Mr. Lichter. "It is a poor sassage that won't fry itself. That is all I've got to say."

As a general thing the older brethren in the well-established charges smiled at Rev. Petit's earnestness, for he had come out collecting in the dog-days, when everything was stagnant, and the very politicians who played agreeable to the people eleven months in the year were enjoying their four weeks' holiday. "He might come again in the fall, but at present it was impossible to move a crank or turn a wheel."

But one or two things the Rev. Petit did not do. He did not preach that "tremenjous sarmont," and he had not the cheek to *bore* any one much. The whole business was disagreeable to him. More than once he went to places determined to be importunate, and came away without intimating that his visit had anything like business connected with it.

One day the spruce little preacher had his eyes opened to some new facts. He went to a gentleman noted for his liberality, and found that his worthy predecessors,—“them fellers that wasn't worth nothin'," had already been there and influenced a large subscription — nay, that the district Synod had years

before assumed and paid off two thousand dollars of the debt, on condition that the members of the congregation would apportion the four hundred that remained among themselves, and pay it off—a condition readily accepted, but never complied with. The Gainfield church debt was therefore a byword and a reproach, and a certain young parson was verdant.

The Rev. Petit was mortified and disgusted. He apologized and struck a bee line for home.

When the disappointed vestry demanded the cause of his failure, he replied by giving them a little piece of history recorded in the Synodical minutes.

“Didn’t think you’d go to them fellers as did subscribe,” said one old man. “Thought mebbe your daddy would pay it all off, bein’ as he’s rich.”

“I beg that you will excuse me for not having asked him,” said the indignant young parson. “My father has enough to do to support your pastor.”

As Rev. Petit had felt while gone like a woman who had left a sick baby at home, he was of course greatly refreshed by his holiday. He afterwards found out that from that time he was numbered with “them fellers that wasn’t worth nothin’.”

CHAPTER VI.

THE SOCIETY IN AND AROUND GAINFIELD.

GAINFIELD was a grand old place. The scenery around was beautiful and the land very rich. Many of the houses were venerable piles, substantially built of native limestone, or of hard-burned bricks, some of which it was said were brought from England before the Revolutionary War. Some of the residences in the suburbs were real old-time family mansions, surrounded by hawthorn hedges and nearly hidden by trees and shrubbery. In the parlors and drawing-rooms of those houses were many heirlooms that some people would be apt to call quaint; portraits of grandparents in ancestral dress; solid silver plate, not half as showy as the galvanized Britannia so common in many places now; and sideboards, tables, sofas, and chairs elaborately carved with feet like a lion's head or claws, but far more suggestive of substantial home feeling, of respectability and comfort, than the rose-wood gewgaws that we see in this age of cheap furniture.

These homes were owned by a class of gentlemen that is fast passing away, without much prospect of a new crop — gentlemen of religious character, intelligence, and wealth, who were not spending their old

age in inglorious ease, much less in dissipation or hypochondriac forebodings, but pursuing their professions, attending to their business, or managing their estates with a peculiar tact that always gave them leisure to enjoy what they had with those who came to see them.

These men and their families made a very delightful community. There was no wrangling among them about superior birth, and no talk to bolster up their social standing, for such things were unnecessary in their case. They were not afraid to bend lest they might break, — to be seen with a poor mechanic or laborer, lest some one might see it, and sneer at *them*. True, there were a few men there who leaned a great deal upon their mere wealth, or some responsible office they happened to hold; and these and their tribes *did* affect aristocratic bearings, like the wives of the bishops of England, who know that the accident of position admits them to the society of lords and nobles. These *did* talk about ancestry and make a great display of dress, manners, and erudition; and these *did* give the tips of their fingers to the poor in a style that was truly refreshing. But with all the splutter, the oil and water, though often mixed, never truly combined, for quiet sentiment assigned every one a true position on the scale of merit.

Of course the society was charming. The people received and entertained one another more like drawing-room acquaintances than like parlor visitors. The evening parties were splendid — the more so, because

they occasioned no extravagance and no fuss. "Father and mother would be glad to have you spend this evening with them," — these simple words from the lips of a bright girl, attended by her brother, were all the invitation given. When evening came, the old and young mingled together as if all were of one age. Sanctified common-sense seemed to rule these social hours. The dress worn, although often rich, was always simple, and never challenged competition. There was a great deal of sensible talk, but no ostentatious display of learning, for men had left their books and business at home, and assembled for relaxation. There was much brilliant wit too, but every arrow was feathered with smiles. After an hour or two spent in pleasant intercourse, all moved together towards the dining-room or broad back verandah, where a table was spread with elegant refreshments and decorated with evergreens and flowers, and did justice to the viands. Soon afterwards the company dispersed, as often as not some young beau escorting an aged grandmother home, and an old man and his wife going squares out of their way to see a blooming girl of sixteen safely within her father's house.

Of course such parties left no unpleasant traces behind them. The next morning business and duty went on with their regular flow. There were no headaches, for there had been no dissipation. No one felt slighted, for there had been no impolite discriminations. No one's feelings had been wounded,

for no rude remarks had been made. Every memory was pleasant. There was no gossip. If the gathering of the night before was referred to, it was spoken of as a delightful little episode in the social life of the town. There was no effort to depress it by criticism, and no attempt to outvie it by something more splendid. The mothers were noble minded and catholic hearted; the sons manly, generous, and honorable; and the daughters, especially, free from low jealousy. Some of the girls had fine voices, yet none of them were envious of Minnie Blythe the evening she sang the Echo song so sweetly at Mary Roberts's promenade party; but just held their breath until she was done, and then encored her until everybody forgot to ask *them* to sing. There was among them almost every style of beauty, yet every one of them said Vera Banker, with her sweet face and golden hair, impersonated the angel the night of Carrie Phillips's tableau, better than any one else could have done it. There were no sneers, no suppressed "tuts" and "pshaws!" while she stood there so much like a *real* angel; and when the representation was over they all kissed her and whispered to one another that she *was sweet*. Even the few who had gotten upon the wrong side of twenty-five, and seemed to have some trepidation on the matrimonial question, did not seem to be disaffected towards those who were younger and had better prospects of success.

There was a great deal of society, such as has just been described, not only in Gainfield, but in the country

around, even down to Pumbeditha, and the region round about that. But very little if any of this was to be found in Mr. Meagre's congregation, especially in Gainfield. Yet to this society Mr. Meagre was kindly invited. Respectability seemed to be the only passport required, and as the clerical profession was highly honored there, this bespoke for the young parson a double welcome. Yet all of this was declined for some time, for various reasons. The young preacher did not know these people, and he did know that his congregation belonged to a different class, and that in some places his denomination had been simply patronized. Yea, even here it had been told him that Dr. Mound, after taking away the best of his flock, had on one occasion looked up at the tablet in front of the church as he passed—a tablet bearing in two lines the name of the church and its date—and as though it were a sign, exclaimed :

“Cakes and beer
For sale here.”

But Dr. Hale, Dr. Mound's successor, a noble man himself, denied this; and as he had opportunity to know the man and some facts in his history, the Rev. Petit was satisfied. Mr. Meagre had perhaps a morbid pride upon these subjects, and not only chose to devote all his time to his own people, but opined that the *élite* around him, if the pure gold, would respect him all the more for doing so. He knew that it was the highest honor to labor among the lowly, and he preferred to commend himself by his own merit

rather than by the recommendations of others. So he, perhaps foolishly, declined even to deliver the letters of introduction, until at last common courtesy absolutely demanded it, and he never sacrificed a professional duty for the sake of mere social enjoyment. But he soon learned to know that the advantages of good society were not to be despised; nay, that they would help rather than hinder his work. In one opinion he was confirmed. The educated people did respect him more for his faithful performance of duty, than they would have done had he been ashamed of his people or slighted his work.

It must not be thought strange that as great a disparity between people as that described in these papers should exist in the same community. This is often the case. Once when at a noted old seminary in one of the Atlantic States, Mr. Meagre was sent up the Hudson river to "fill a pulpit." No one need be told that the wealth of the Empire City overflows in that direction, and that almost every prominent point on the river is crowned with a villa, for these facts are almost as noted as the beautiful scenery of that region. There the young preacher was thrown into contact with men whose names are intimately connected with the political and religious history of the nation, and yet, in the midst of these people he found those who not only looked upon the beauties of earth and sky with the apathy of oxen, but who did not know what was meant by family prayers. For after Rev. Petit had tried to explain the nature and object of these devotions, and to engage those with whom he stayed, in them, he arose

from his knees on one occasion, and found the members of the family standing around him in mute wonder; and the first remark they made was, "It is so funny to see you preachin' on your knees at that cheer, just like in meetin'."

Besides, many of those whose ideas and speeches have been set forth in the previous chapters of this wondrous history, were perhaps extreme characters; and yet such characters are scattered through the congregations all over the land—men and women who are thorns in the flesh of many hard-working pastors. Dr. Kay was not without at least one of them, for one day when Mr. Meagre was permitted to look over one of the Doctor's sermons, he found written on one corner of the manuscript, "Surcingle," and upon inquiry he found that the good brother whose name was there inscribed, although not a very bad man at heart, had bothered even his imperturbable pastor sufficiently to mar his comfort in delivering that discourse. Misery loves company, and Mr. Meagre took comfort from this; that is, he found he was not the only man who had troubles of the kind, and never doubted his friend's ability to sympathize with him, even though Brother Surcingle was the only case Mr. Kay had. He afterwards found that Rev. Mr. Corneel had several of this kind; yet even this was not so bad, for in Mr. Meagre's congregation this element preponderated. But then Mr. Meagre had some few good men too, even in Gainfield, but more especially at Pumbeditha.

CHAPTER VII.

VISITING THE COUNTRY MEMBERS.

PUMBEDITHA was, or rather had been, of course, a place of wonders. It was called after an oriental city, where the people are said to have shown the golden palm tree, and such like. This modern Pumbeditha is said to have had a visit from a Southern branch of the family of Salem witches about three-quarters of a century ago. Old Mr. Gottlieb, the tavern-keeper, remembered their manifestations well, and told many stories about them. Indeed, there were some documentary evidences to show how far their presence and power were believed in times past. They had now departed, however, it was hoped never to return, although old Christopher Ludwig thought they rode his colts (as he often found a stirrup in their manes), and kept an inverted horseshoe nailed over his door, on the side of the house furthest from the creek, to keep the intruders out. From the side nearest the creek he feared no invasion, as

“A running stream they dare na cross.”

Moreover, if reports were true, the village had once been the seat of all kinds of wickedness. It was situated at a point where many roads crossed each

other, and was equi-distant from several towns of more or less importance. At this place all the villany of these towns and the surrounding country found its expression on Sundays—the appointed time for card-playing, horseracing, cockfighting, drunkenness, and worse things.

But the town afforded an illustration of the power of grace for the overthrow of Satan. Eminent and earnest men had labored there, and their prayers and preaching had not been in vain, for the place had vastly recovered from its past ill-fame. Good men lived there. Among these were some of rare intelligence—old Dr. Arlington, for instance, who, although past seventy-five, had such a memory of Homer and Virgil that Rev. Petit, just fresh from the schools, was obliged to brush up his “little Latin and less Greek,” to keep him company. There, too, lived Mr. Middleton, and around this place dwelt many of Mr. Meagre’s country members.

These people were nearly all well-to-do in the world, either living on small farms of their own, or else engaged as tenants, whose bargains with the “lord of the manor” gave them ample opportunity to gain an honest living. They were evidently a growing people—a people growing in grace. Horseracing on the way from church had long been given up, as discreditable to any community, and the old practice of feeding the parson with hard soap and dried apples was giving way to a more liberal policy. True, some of them had been in the habit of giving fifty cents yearly,

which amount they took out of the old stocking leg, and always handed to the preacher *in propria persona* after church; partly to be certain that it reached its destination, and partly with the idea of having their distinguished liberality acknowledged; but they had honestly thought that enough, and after Mr. Meagre, in compliance with an order of Synod, preached on pastoral support, they doubled their subscriptions.

These people were to be visited, and it afforded the young parson pleasure to do so, as he felt convinced that they were anxious to have him come to see them. They would send for him and take him back to Mr. Middleton's at any time that he would designate, and very often the programme on the farm was modified to suit his convenience. The "gude wife" had everything about the house in good trim—the porches scrubbed, the tin things shining like the sheen of the sea, and, if it were the season, a large bunch of lilacs or snowballs before the fireplace in the parlor. The men did not count on more than half a day's work, as they wished to spend some time with the parson. They took pride in showing him the stock, told him all about their farming operations, and listened attentively to some sage remarks he occasionally made about the use of lime as a fertilizer.

The only difficulty was that these kind people knew little of the importance of time to the young minister. It was scarcely considered a visit if he did not "stay all night," and would have been thought a slight if he had, in any case, not stopped long enough to take

a "meal's victuals" with them. So Rev. Petit's feet were stuck under many a table, and the more he ate the more he increased his popularity. They gave him the best in the smokehouse and dairy, and, as usual, it was said upon good authority that the poultry yard was laid under heavy contributions whenever the little preacher was expected.

To give some idea of the variety and quantity set before him, the following inventory of the contents of a table may be copied from his diary.

"The central dish before me contained three broiled spring chickens, with their legs crossed, and ornamented with their own livers and gizzards. This dish was bounded on the north by enough fried ham to satisfy six men with moderate appetites; on the south by a corresponding quantity of beef, with suitable gravy; on the east by a round plate piled high with cold veal and stuffing; and on the west by a similar plate filled with chip-beef. *That was all the meat, I believe.*"

"On one corner of the table was about a hat-full of biscuits, and on the other was an old-fashioned, oblong, red, tin bread-pan, with a full loaf sliced in it. 'Plenty of the staff of life,' said I to myself, but my musings were disturbed by mine hostess, who held before me a plate of hot flannel cakes, upon which melted butter had been poured before they left the kitchen. And as it was thought they might require more to make them go down easily, a roll of fully two pounds of *unmelted* butter was put within my reach.

Besides these things, the following articles were on the table: Three varieties of pickles — cucumbers, red beets, and cabbage; three ditto preserves — peaches, plums, and cherries; one bowl cottage cheese, with a tablespoon in it; one plate of ‘store cheese,’ and half a bread-basket of ginger crackers to top off with. To wash all of this down, Mrs. Fulton had prepared a half-gallon tin coffee-pot of Java, which being declined, she produced a tea-pot with the lid tied to the handle, filled with a strong decoction of Young Hyson, or some other variety of the Chinese staple.

“ ‘I am sorry, madam, but I never drink tea either,’ quoth I, whereupon she uncovered a pitcher of very rich milk. I drank a full tumbler of that to satisfy Mrs. Fulton, and found it so palatable that I drank another to satisfy myself.”

Be it remembered that this slight repast was prepared for Mr. Meagre alone. The husband and the son had taken a drove of sheep to market, and, of course, were not at home, and the good lady, the only other member of the family, did not sit down to the table at all, but stood up to hand things and keep the flies off. ‘Yes, it was all intended for the minister, for there was only one plate put down; and if Mrs. Fulton calculated upon eating herself of that supper, she must have expected to put up with the fragments.

Now no doubt Mrs. Tuber would have thought all of this a very unfashionable, if not a very vulgar *tea*. She would have scorned to cook as much for dinner on

Thanksgiving-day for all her boarders, and would have adjudged a little bread and butter, with the beverage she usually served, far more respectable for professional gentlemen. But it is to be doubted whether Mrs. Tuber would not have enjoyed Mrs. Fulton's nicely cooked chickens, et ceteras, all free of cost to her, as much as any mincing nabob ever relished his French dainties at Delmonico's; for it was notorious that she ate things as unsentimental as ham and eggs for her own supper, after the boarders had retired. And had Mr. Meagre been hungry he could have disposed of a piece of Mrs. Fulton's ham, and left enough chicken bones on his plate to give Cuvier or Agassiz a hint as to what fowl they belonged, for these dishes were very savory. But what was he, who had eaten lamb and salad three hours before at Mr. Middleton's, to do with all of this provision? If he could have played anaconda, he might have put himself around a supply that would have saved him the trouble of feeding again for a week, and could have laughed at Mrs. Tuber when she punished his laziness by denying him any breakfast. And nothing would have pleased Mrs. Fulton more. Indeed, she expected to judge of her pastor's enjoyment in her house by the quantity he ate. Aware of this, Rev. Petit did the best he could, but made very little impression upon the bountiful supply before him. The good lady tried to tempt him to further indulgence, setting the preserves and cream before him, and handing the ginger crackers when she could not prevail on him to take any more meat. She

apologized for the poor supper. "I had expected," she said, "to give you green peas and kidney potatoes, but the season for them is over now. If you get hungry before bedtime you must tell me, and I will try to get you something. Pity the oats-apples are not ripe. Mr. Jacobs, that's our preacher before you came, was wonderful fond of them. When Jerry Sneathen comes for his cow, I'll get him to shake you some early pears. I would knock them with a rake-handle, but a body don't get the best that way."

At another place, one winter evening, Mr. Meagre sat down to a supper of which the following was the bill of fare: A coil of sausage that would have about covered the bottom of a half-bushel measure; a considerable quantity of "pudding;" several joints of chine; spare ribs from half a hog; three layers of scrapple on a big turkey dish; two soup plates stacked with mashed potatoes; two bowls of dried fruit—apples and cherries stewed together; two prints of butter, shaped like miniature kegs; a variety of preserves and pickles in saucers; several pies, and a sponge cake.

In this case, however, there were six persons to eat. Mr. Meagre had been out all day, and had a morbid appetite; so he ate several inches of the sausage, and dreamed all night that he was falling off a church-steeple, or pursued by bears.

Perhaps the two suppers just described were a little more bountiful than many others, yet the most of those spread before Mr. Meagre were distinguished for abundance. It seemed strange to him that some

of the people who were so profuse in this way, were so illiberal in another. The food they cooked for a single meal, when the parson was expected, would have brought, at an available market valuation, a sum equal to twice the amount they subscribed for his salary. Could the young preacher have converted all that was prepared for him, and to which he was welcome there, into coin, it would have been of vast service to him; but it was the custom to offer it in the form of prepared food, and so it was often a dead loss all around. Still it was a delicate matter for him to attempt to enlighten them on this point, and give a different shape to their liberality. Old Tommy Whittleby, as they called him, was so pleased with Mr. Meagre the night he married that couple at his house, that, although no member of the church, he declared if the little preacher were a married man, and had a place to keep it, he would give him a shoat, yet Uncle Tommy never thought of selling the shoat and giving him the money; and as Rev. Petit could not suggest this, the shoat was left to grunt in Uncle Tommy's barnyard, and the expression of good-will was all the little preacher got.

One-third of the young preacher's time was spent in and around Pumbeditha, and as he did most of his studying in Gainfield, this time was spent among the people. He visited them, talked with them, and prayed with them. In addition to this, as was expected,

“He ate, and drank, and slept, and then,
He ate, and drank, and slept again.”

This mere luxuriating was pleasant enough at times, though at other times it was a real bore. A man gets tired even of this. And then, Mr. Meagre had his trials there, too; for there were some queer people in the neighborhood, and mention may be made of them in the subsequent chapters of this distinguished work.

CHAPTER VIII.

THRILLING INCIDENTS.

ONE day, not long after Mr. Meagre had "settled" in his new field of labor, it was necessary for him to go from Pumbeditha to Gainfield. It happened to be inconvenient for Mr. Middleton to take him to the depôt that day in the "Diligence," and it was determined to send him alone on *horseback*. He could carry his carpet-bag and umbrella before him, and send the horse home by a gentleman who was expected on the train.

Now of all the ridiculous figures that Rev. Petit ever cut, his appearance on horseback was by far the most remarkable. When a boy, he was willing to risk his neck on anything in shape of a horse that came to his father's stable; but those days were past. He he had hardly been astride of a horse for years, and then at home, and only on Boston, a venerable bob-

tail, some years his senior, upon whose back a generation and a half of Meagres had learned to ride. This Boston was once known all over the country as a famous racker. In his old age, however, he was distinguished more especially for his vivacity and sure-footedness when turned into a field, and for his laziness and liability to stumble when certain members of the family were on his back. Prominent among these was Rev. Petit, who, after hard study had made him nervous, although armed with two spurs and a whip, would often compromise with Boston on two miles an hour and a safe neck. As may be supposed, the young parson entertained the idea of riding a *strange* horse as Byron looked upon the ocean, and as Charley looked upon the monkey:—with emotions of “*pleasing fear*.”

“You Protestant clergymen,” said a Roman priest to him one day, “*do* mortify the flesh, but it is always *horse* flesh.” This remark was called forth by the fact that Rev. Jehu Gallopaway had nearly killed a fine animal the day before by hard driving. Mr. Gallopaway was a representative of a class of clerical horsemen whose righteousness, alas! does not show itself by mercy to their beasts. But whatever else were Mr. Meagre’s faults, he did not belong to that class; he was rather a representative of that class of preachers who, though they may not have much tenderness of heart, or even common judgment, yet have the bump of self-preservation too fully developed to allow them to be cruel. Had Mr. Meagre been called upon

to die on a battle-field, or to expose himself to deadly contagion, he probably would not have hesitated; but the idea of having his life knocked out on a stone pile by a beast that any boor in the country could have managed, had too little glory in it to invite martyrdom.

The Bucephalus on which the young brother was to ride that day, was just three years old. Mr. Meagre looked at the brute's feet and saw that they had no shoes on, his only infallible sign of a *colt*. He intimated that he had fears, but Mr. Middleton was certain the animal was "safe." To be sure "the critter" was rather awkward yet in his gait and apt to "shy off" a little, but not "generally skittish," as Sam the ostler said. Mr. Middleton offered to enter bail himself that the colt would walk to the depôt and deposit his load "safe and sound," unless Mr. Meagre would wilfully and deliberately determine to *roll off*; he would not put any one into danger, and in giving assurances he had depended more on the gentleness of his beast than on the horsemanship of his pastor.

When mounted, it is probable that Mr. Meagre looked more like a monkey in a menagerie than like the human part of a centaur, for he leaned forward and clamped the horse's shoulders with his knees as if that hold was his only dependence. Some gentlemen whom he passed in the streets of the village wore a peculiar smile, and a young lady in whom it was said Rev. Petit was interested, peeped through the window

blinds and laughed. But he was too much concerned for his safety to be careful of appearances.

The horse struck a dead walk from the very start and did not slacken his pace often, except when a fly bit him, when he would stop altogether, lift his hind foot and kick it off, and then resume the even tenor of his way. Although the distance to be travelled was only three miles, and Mr. Meagre had an hour and a half to make the journey in, he found that his time was nearly out when he got to the end of the second mile. And now came the question, Shall I ride faster and run the risk of being thrown off, or take my time and miss the cars? He took the first horn of the dilemma, and was duly rewarded with the worst consequences of having taken both. For he was not only thrown off, but so belated by the mishap that the cars had passed the station an hour before he got there.

The misfortune befell Mr. Meagre on this wise: he had urged his Rosinante into a brisk trot, when an uncouth porker, either highly amused at the figure before it, or possessed of the spirit that entered into its ancestors in the country of the Gadarenes, jumped out from a mud-hole, and making some of the demonstrations peculiar to its kind, frightened the colt to the sad discomfiture of the rider. The old toll-gate keeper who witnessed the catastrophe, said the little preacher would not have been thrown off if he had not let go his hold of the bridle and clutched his umbrella convulsively with both hands. As he *did*

do this, however, and as that useful appendage of a traveller was in no way fastened to the horse, there was nothing to keep him in the saddle. No bones were broken, as the juvenile parson fell into a mud-puddle just vacated by the irreverent pig. His (we mean the parson's) glossy black coat, however, assumed a drab color, which when the warm sun shone upon it turned into a turnpike grey.

The colt, relieved of its burden, ran home and gave Mr. Middleton's folks an awful fright. Mr. Meagre's only plan was to brush his clothes as well as he could and walk to the station. As stated before, he got there an hour too late, and in company with the gentleman who had been waiting for the horse, walked back to Pumbeditha, where he was heartily laughed at. In fact, the preacher found the village in a state of excitement in regard to him. The exaggerated reports about his injuries had been contradicted by a gentleman who rode into town in advance of him, and heralded the fact that he was unhurt but dreadfully muddy. This relieved the anxiety of the people, but stimulated their curiosity to see him, now most anxious *not to be seen*. He found that he could not avoid observation, for the folks were all agog, and a back route over the garden fences was impracticable. So through the town he went. The blacksmith stood at his shop door with his leathern apron on, his hammer in one hand and his pincers in the other; the store-keepers just happened to be fixing their goods on the boxes out front; the women managed to be fastening

their parlor shutters or sweeping their pavements, and either peeped through the cracks or leaned on their broom handles and stared. In addition to this, an ever-increasing crowd of little boys met Mr. Meagre at the very gates of the city, and followed him through the street as they usually followed an Italian with a hand-organ. The music the young parson heard consisted of hysterical giggles, which in one place broke into a loud laugh. It must be said to his credit, however, that he enjoyed the laugh as much as any one else, and afterwards learned to ride an *old* horse of Mr. Middleton's with some degree of comfort.

At another time the young parson was greatly worried by dogs. He had a great fear of cross canines, and his way was frequently disputed by them when going from house to house in the country around Pumbeditha on pastoral duty. At one place a little white and tan spotted cur, with rabbit ears and a tail that curled in a full circle, annoyed him excessively; not that the brute was formidable, but fierce and treacherous. Mr. Meagre often tried to coax him, but smacking lips and snapping fingers were all in vain. Pinkey declined all overtures. When approached he would run under a chair or bureau, as if agreeing to a cessation of hostilities, and then violate his truce by making an unexpected sally and snapping at the clerical legs. Still Mrs. Stemple had not sense enough to keep him out of the room, and one day he bit her pastor in the heel while engaged in prayer with the family. Fortunately Mr. Meagre, unlike Achilles, was

less vulnerable there than anywhere else, and the only mark of a wound that was left was the print of a small tooth on a piece of patent leather ; but the devotions were disturbed.

But Mr. Meagre was annoyed more especially once, when he was staying "all night" at the house of a parishioner. Mr. and Mrs. Hayfield were two of the most simple-hearted people on the earth. They did not know that there was a bit of deceit or rascality in the world, and it was refreshing to sit and talk with them. But their dogs were the terror of the neighborhood, as they proved to be to Mr. Meagre on that memorable August night. All the members of the family had been working hard in some way or other that day, for they were gathering their harvest. Mr. Meagre had prayed with them immediately after supper, and at dusk they went to bed. Thinking in the honesty of their hearts that the preacher must be tired too, they gave him about two inches of a candle, and told him that if he choose he could retire too. This was hard enough for one who was accustomed to read until the "wee sma' hours," and who was sleepless as an owl at best ; but necessity knew no law but compliance.

The floor of the room assigned to "Brother Meagre" was nearly on a level with the ground on which the house stood, and a door opened on either side into the yard and garden. The bed in the room seemed to be used as a depository for other feather beds when these were not in use, for they were piled upon

it half way to the ceiling. How to get on the top of this series of beds was the first question with Rev. Petit, and how to sleep when he was there, the second. He read until his light gave out, and then with the aid of a hickory chair, the back of which formed a kind of ladder, he scaled the awful height and plunged in. There he sweltered for some time, for it was awfully hot.

At length it occurred to him that he would open both doors and have a current of air. Having effected this improvement, he got into bed again, and fell into a confused sleep. What were his dreams history has never recorded, but he was awakened in time to find that the dogs had not only gotten on his trail, but "treed him." They were in the room not only barking around the bed, but trying to get on it, and pulling the cover at an awful rate. Darkness and confusion, fright and feathers, prevented the young parson from seeing them, but their presence and designs were apparent enough. His only safety was to lie still, use the bed-cover as a coat of mail, and call for relief. How long he suffered in this way he did not know: it seemed an age, and it might have seemed two, but Mrs. Hayfield heard his cry and relieved his distress with all possible delicacy and despatch. The intruders were shut out, and the young parson slept, or tried to sleep, until morning. The joke was too good to be kept, but Mr. Meagre has not forgotten those dogs to this day.

CHAPTER IX.

BALLS, AND HOW THE PARSON COUNTENANCED THEM.

As already intimated, Mr. Meagre had some difficulty with the youth of his congregation. That some of the boys were bad was a notorious fact. It was alleged that they played truant, swore, chewed tobacco, stole fruit, and mutilated the shade trees on the side-walks. For these things they had not only been energetically cudgelled, but had been penned up until they committed whole chapters of the Bible and catechism to memory; yea, and they had been even required to "tend church," as a condign punishment. In cases of special sin, the punishment was sometimes instant as well as condign. Old John Flailer had stopped saying grace to drive Billy out of the house for laughing when the cat jumped on the table and stole the meat, while the old man was elaborately blessing it. But cuffs and large doses of doctrinal literature thus wholesomely administered, had failed to make the youngsters pious. Indeed, the more the old people wanted to make the young ones pious, the more the young ones wouldn't be made pious. They looked upon the Heavenly Father as a "Dreadful God," and on His religion as a terrible infliction. All they knew of religion was that everything they did

was a sin, and that all sin must be punished: and if they kept from sinning it was because they were afraid of being "flogged" for it. If they had one wish above another, it was that they could be like boys whose parents were not Christians. As it was, to them churches were dreary dungeons; prayers, sermons, Bibles, and catechisms, were instruments of torture; and pastors and parents were only jailers and executioners. Of course the pastor of their own church was to be master of the inquisition.

One Saturday a crowd of the boys went out and played ball. As most of those very boys had been kept in limbo all the week for catching and plucking an old German's geese down at Indian Spring, this new freak of youthful wickedness was looked upon not only as a palpable proof that punishment had done no good, but as an open defiant protest against paternal restraint. The fathers and mothers were in great distress. It looked to them as if the divine covenant had been broken with them as parents, for they had trained up their children in the way they should go, and now they were departing from it. One thing was certain: the children had not been spoiled at home, for the rod had not been spared.

Now, only a few weeks before this, all the youthful forces of the congregation had been marshalled into the church and exposed to Mr. Meagre's fire on "disobedience to parents." And as if that were not enough to satisfy Elder Strapiron, that functionary of the church had "taken advantage of the pastor's

absence that afternoon," as he said, to read to the Sunday-school about the forty-two children who were torn in pieces by she-bears for mocking the prophet Elisha. Upon this piece of Bible history Elder Absalom had commented with such intelligence and force, as made up for Mr. Meagre's deficiency in the morning. Now if Mr. Meagre alone had preached to the children, this continued perversity might have been accounted for; but as Elder Strapiron had himself preached on the subject, the difficulty could not be a want of proper instruction and exhortation. However, it was resolved to request the pastor to preach a sermon against ball playing.

The request was made with due formality. It was not charged that the boys had violated any injunction of their parents in the case referred to, for no restrictions had been laid upon them; nor had they been indecorous or disrespectful; they had "only played ball."

"Mr. Meagre, couldn't you preach a special sarmon *agin ball playin'.*" To the holy horror of the committee, Rev. Petit refused point blank.

"Yes, but Mr. Meagre, your perticler friend, Dr. Kay, even has *published* a sarmon *agin balls* and poplar amusements in gineral. You might at least *preach* one. It's demanded by the times."

The juvenile preacher's curly head shook horizontally. He had an opinion of his own in which Dr. Kay would probably concur. What that opinion was, no one knew until the afternoon of the fourth

of July, when Rev. Petit showed his colors by taking a game of ball with the boys himself.

When he first came on the ground, the youngsters were as startled as if old Mr. Krime had caught them in his peach orchard. Those who were not scared too badly, ran away; those who were, stood still and beat the ground with their clubs and bats. All were certain that the preacher had come there with some sinister motive. Even when he proposed to play with them, they thought he meant to commit them to some overt act, and then bear witness against them. But by degrees they gained confidence and had a fine game, although it was remarked that not a single oath was sworn during the whole hour.

Various constructions were put upon this action of Mr. Meagre's by the elder members of the congregation. Some thought he was young himself, and had not yet gotten over his own boyish propensities. A great many said the preacher was taking part with the boys over against their parents. One person was kind enough to say that Mr. Meagre evidently thought that ball playing was not sinful in itself, and not only intended what he did as a deliverance on the subject, but perhaps had some good design as far as the boys themselves were concerned. This seemed to satisfy some, but outraged the holiness of others, who declared that they would not go to hear any man preach who held such theories and indulged in such practices. In this determination one or two persisted for two weeks, and even kept their sons from "Catechise" now, when

for the first time in their lives they wanted to go. Mrs. Gibbs shut her Jim up in the smokehouse all day on the fifth of July, and did not allow him to leave the yard for ten days, for fear "Meagre might spile him." At the end of that time her necessities made her relent. She wanted salt, and sent Jim down the street with three cents to buy a quart. The boy was so glad to be free from "durance vile" that he not only stayed all day, but went to the tavern and lost the three cents at a game of toss. Nor did the evil stop here. Jim was arrested and held to answer the charge of petty gambling. In this state of affairs, Mrs. Gibbs sent for her pastor to relieve her distress.

"What have you been doing, Jim?" asked Mr. Meagre, as he entered the Mayor's office.

"Playin' crack-loo!" sobbed Jim.

"And what is crack-loo? How do you play it, Jim?"

"Why you go to a place where there aint no carpet on the floor, and fillip up a cent, and the feller that gits nearest to the crack in the boards when the cent falls — why he wins."

Of course Jim's confession was not taken as evidence against him, but there was proof enough to establish his guilt without that.

Mr. Stanhope, the Mayor, a noble-hearted man, called Mr. Meagre aside for consultation. He was unwilling to destroy the boy's self-respect by sending him to jail — a disgrace from which very few boys recover sufficiently to be emulous of good. He therefore proposed to let Jim go with a reprimand, as this

was his first offence, if Mr. Meagre would nominally go his bail for future good behavior. This the young parson agreed to do, and the fact was announced in open court. Then presto! change! Mrs. Gibbs, who but a few hours before thought her pastor a very dangerous man, now declared that he was the best friend she ever had. She almost fell upon his neck, perhaps would have quite done so, had he not quickly changed his position.

"O! Mr. Meagre," she said, "I'll never, never, never forget your kindness, but *do* tell me, what shall I do to keep Jim from taverns and gamblin'?"

"Let him play ball," said the pastor. Mrs. Gibbs changed her sobs for a look of mute surprise, which seemed to ask Mr. Meagre if he was not ridiculing her, but as she remembered that he never trifled with his people, she soon concluded that he was in dead earnest.

"I mean what I say," said Rev. Petit; "and as I am not only your pastor, but what is more to you just now, Jim's bail, and am liable for him, I think my advice is worthy of some respect."

"What difference can playing ball make?" asked the worthy dame.

"A great deal, madam. You teach your boy that *everything* is wrong. He finds out that that is not true, and soon learns to think that *nothing* is wrong. You make his home so hot for him that he is glad to run away from it whenever he can. Make his home the *most pleasant* place to him in the world, and he

will *prefer it to any place in the world*. Allow him *innocent* amusements, and he will not run into *wickedness* for the sake of mere variety. Every engine ought to have a safety-valve, Mrs. Gibbs, to let off surplus steam; and if you do not allow your boy some vent for his animal life and boyish feelings, he will burst one of these days and blow you up in the process. Old Fritz, of Prussia, broke his son's flute over his head, and the young prince went to playing cards."

Mrs. Gibbs took her pastor's advice, and Jim improved in his disposition and morals. He did not care to run the risk of going to jail for playing crack-loo when he could play ball without the fear of being penned in the smokehouse for it. The very next Saturday Jim came home from his sport at 3 o'clock, and satisfied with the play and company he had enjoyed, did not care to run off down the street, but went into the garden and hoed potatoes without being told to do it. Mrs. Gibbs said she had often stood over him with a stick and made him do it, but he never did it as well as he did it that day.

Not very long afterwards, Jim persuaded the boys to forego the pleasure of a game of ball entirely, and form a whitewashing association to improve the appearance of the fence back of the church; and when Mr. Meagre came to give them lessons in the catechism, he expressed his gratification at the work Jim's part was especially well done. He had covered every spot in the boards with lime without splashing a bit on the ground, and for this the parson compli-

mented him. This gave birth to a new idea in the boy's mind. He had always wanted to get a situation as driver of a circus wagon, but now concluded that he would learn to be a house-painter. The next week he called to consult his pastor about it, and was confirmed in the idea that house-painting would be the better of the two vocations. In the following spring Jim was duly apprenticed, and two years afterwards he was not only a consistent communicant member of the congregation, but what was more in the eyes of some of his older brethren, when the church was repaired he varnished the tops of all the pews for nothing, and saved seven dollars and a half.

CHAPTER X.

THE YOUNG PARSON BECOMES A SON OF JUBAL.

BEFORE Jim Gibbs's improvement was developed, Mr. Meagre had other cases somewhat like his in their general character. Only one of them can now be given.

Mrs. Rate's idea of religion was expressed fully and only by the word "*solemnity*." A visit from her pastor always invested her house with an air of peculiar sanctity. Upon one of these pious occasions, little Sam broke into the room, blowing a willow

whistle vociferously. Mrs. Rate was, of course, horrified at this piece of unhallowed temerity; and in order to show her minister that she was in no way accountable for such wickedness, she disclaimed all knowledge of the affair, by demanding of Sam to confess instantly where he got that ugly thing. To the surprise of the good woman, Rev. Petit acknowledged that he had made the whistle for the boy himself.

A clap of thunder from a clear sky could not have surprised her more. Did she understand Mr. Meagre? There must be some mistake, and to reassure herself she repeated the inquiry; and the young parson, in a set speech, avowed distinctly, emphatically, and unequivocally, that he was the maker of the eccentric production in Sam's mouth.

"I made it," he said, "and I made it for Sam. I found him down by the Indian Spring, fishing for tadpoles in the mud; and to keep him from getting wet and dirty, as well as to stop his persecution of a crop of prospective frogs, I made him that whistle from a willow branch that hung over the stream, and taught his infant lips to blow it."

"Yes, and mam," said the namesake of Weller's son, "he broke a bran splinter new knife a doin' it, and didn't cuss nor say nuthin' bad like you did when you broke pap's old one trimmin' the curran' bushes."

Mrs. Rate looked daggers at Sam, and said something to the effect that "children and fools *never* speak the truth," but part of the remark was lost to the parson, as his apt pupil had nearly drowned the

maternal voice by a long shrill toot of his new instrument. The nonplussed mother compromised with her hopeful by sending him into the kitchen to have his hands washed, and tried to scare up some other topic of conversation. When Mr. Meagre arose to leave, he said, "Mrs. Rate, I have a request to make of you."

The good lady had hardly the courage to ask what it was, as she feared he might say, "Do not use any more bad words when you break an old knife," but at last she stammered out, "What is it, Mr. Meagre?"

"Don't whip Sam when I am gone."

She was of course relieved in one way, but awfully embarrassed in another. At length she asked, "Now, Mr. Meagre, what makes you think I am going to lick him?"

"I do not *think* anything about it," said he, "for I *know* it. I know it by intuition. Besides, I saw it in the thunder-storm on your face awhile ago, and I am sure it is the intention of your heart now. You can hardly wait until I am gone, and I will *not go* until I have your promise."

"But, Mr. Meagre, what am I to do to keep him from telling every little bad thing that happens?"

"Do not say or do any bad things. *Now promise me you will not whip Sam.*"

Mrs. Rate was reluctant to give her assent. Revenge was sweet : she was longing, yea, burning to tan Sam's hide completely, not for whistling, she did not care a fig for that after she knew where the whistle

came from, but for exposing her. But she, perhaps, argued that if she did whip him the parson would "get mad and have her before the meetin' for sayin' bad words," so she gave her promise, and Mr. Meagre took his hat and left.

A few weeks after this Mrs. Rate sent for her pastor in great haste. He of course thought some one was sick, dying, or dead, and obeyed the summons without a moment's delay.

"What's the matter, Mrs. Rate?" asked he, "can I do anything for you?"

"Why, Mr. Meagre, I sent to see if you wouldn't make Sam another whistle. He didn't scratch the furniture or break anything while he had it—just sot still and *blowed*; but I tramped on it with my foot yisterday and broke it, and I havn't had a bit of peace since. A body can put up with his noise when he is so good other ways."

Unfortunately, the season was too far advanced for willow whistles: the sap would not run, and the parson could not gratify Mrs. Rate's wish, but he bought Sam a Jews-harp, and having convinced the boy that it was an advancement on his broken whistle, that answered every purpose, and he placed it in his eager hands. When the parson left this time, he told Mrs. Rate to send for him at any hour in the night, rather than get angry and say bad words, or whip Sam when there was no necessity for it.

It soon became apparent that Mr. Meagre differed from his congregation in regard to the symptoms ex-

hibited by the sin-sick boys, and that he had a different method of treatment. He publicly gave a "diagnosis" of the prevailing disease in a sermon on "binding heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and laying them on men's backs." From the theory therein set forth Mr. Absalom Strapiron dissented. "I count myself a Christian," he said, "and yet I never feel like playing." As, however, Father Absalom acknowledged that he had fought "bumble-bees" and robbed birds' nests on Sunday, when he was a boy, and as he remembered how his own kid gloves had risen before him like the ghost of Banquo when he commenced to rail about those the parson wore, he subsided, and was content with sullen silence. Mr. Crimp, too, thought all playing was wrong: — the boys wore out so many clothes, and his Bob had broken a poor widow's window one day, which everybody said "Bob's father ought to pay for." But as some of Mr. Crimp's business transactions were of doubtful propriety, his opinion was of very little weight in questions of morality. As for Mr. Flailer, he said right out that the boys who did such things ought to be served like the bad boys in the time of Moses — "put out of the city and stoned to death," but as he had been known to curse as well as beat Billy, it was said that he could not throw the first stone.

The women were generally tired of beating their children, and glad to have a cessation of hostilities, on the ground that it saved them trouble, if on no other. And besides, they could whip their children

as much as they pleased anyhow — so they yielded the *theory* of leniency ; and as they were the power behind the throne, the popular sentiment of the congregation soon preponderated vastly in favor of Mr. Meagre's views. Indeed, they inclined to the other extreme. The pastor was to be an undisguised and universal Santa Claus, to furnish their children with toys and practise pleasing arts that would lull their teething babies to sleep ; the church was to be a play-room, and religion a matter of mere fun ; even the severest duties of the Christian were to be a sugar-plum affair, and Rev. Petit was to supply the confectious free of trouble and cost. It was suggested that he might say some funny things in the pulpit, like Mr. Buffoon, the temperance lecturer, just to make the children laugh a little. One prominent member with a philosophical mind, a sort of Lord Bacon, had noticed that the Sunday-school was well filled "just before the picnic," and suggested that it would be well to have a regular series of picnics. Of course, gingerbread and ice-cream were to be the chief incentives to early piety. Another one of these inductive philosophers thought Mr. Meagre was "very inconsistent in taking him to task for getting tight and tearing down a few fences just for sport."

Mr. Meagre recollected the proverb : "*Incidit in Scyllam qui vult vitare Charybdem.*" In getting his bark off the rock, there was danger of its being swallowed up in the whirlpool, and he tried to steer between the two.

CHAPTER XI.

"GREAT EXPECTATIONS"—THE LOVE PART OF
THE STORY BEGINS—THE HEROINE ENTERS.

ONE Monday morning, probably an hour after Mrs. Tuber's breakfast-table had been cleared off, the young parson's slumbers were disturbed by a knock at his door. As, however, he was expecting a pitcher of water, he simply called out, "Come in," and turned over for a few moments' additional sleep. He had fairly commenced to carry this laudable purpose into execution, and probably would have presumed on an "extension of time," had not a series of jerks at the bed-clothes and a few pokes in his ribs aroused him to the consciousness that there was a stranger in the room, anxious for an audience.

Rev. Petit was startled. He sat up in the bed and rubbed his eyes in a state of bewilderment. "Well? Ah—yes! Good morning, sir. Can I do anything for you? Anybody sick? Please be seated."

The visitor was a man about fifty years of age, rather above the average height, with sandy hair mixed with grey, sharp, determined features, and a pair of sparkling hazel eyes. When asked to sit down, he passed by two or three chairs and squatted himself on a low ottoman that was placed near the

jamb of the ingle. Having thus disposed of himself, he took off his hat—a white, or rather a brownish one, with long rough fur, and deposited it upon the floor by his side; then pulled a bandanna from it and wiped the perspiration from his brow.

"Monsus warm," said he.

"Yes, sir," replied Mr. Meagre; "I am sorry it cost you so much effort to awaken me, but I did not get to sleep until four o'clock this morning."

"No difference, Mr. Meagre, I just come to see you on a little serious business."

"I am ready to serve you in any way, sir," said the parson. "Just go into the parlor below and I will join you in a few moments."

"No use at all: I only wanted to engage you to marry me and another young lady to-morrow evening."

Ha! my first wedding! thought the miniature clergyman. Up to this time he thought the man had come for him to preach his wife's funeral sermon, and was prepared to sympathize with him, but when he found that a different task awaited him, the whole affair presented itself in a comical light.

"And who is the *other* young lady?" he inquired.

"One Kit Carson."

"Any relation to Texas Kit?"

"Don't know; 'spec' she is. She's got a good many kinfolks, and she's the best one among 'em. Monsus fine gal, that."

"No doubt you think so," said Mr. Meagre.

“Yaas, indeed, you must know her. Belongs to your meetin’; sits right fornenst old Mrs. Graves, not fur from the front, on the side towards the Court-house.”

“Oh, yes,” said the parson, rubbing his forehead to assist his memory, “she is a small, spare woman, is she not?”

“No indeed; she’d make well nigh on to six people as big as you are.”

Rev. Petit looked into the man’s eyes and felt convinced that he meant to cast no reflection, and that he was not even irritated that so important a person as his elect bride was unknown to her pastor.

“I must be mistaken then,” he said, “but you will excuse me, as I am a comparative stranger here.”

“Rec’on you don’t know her yit, but I do, just as *easy*. You might have heard of her, though. Old Mr. Strapiron wanted her so bad when his other wife died; but very like you would not know her by that neither; they say he wanted mighty nigh every gal in the meetin’ some time or ’nother. He used to be lookin’ round all the time of sarmont. Once he got up on his tip toes, to see if somebody was in. He allers got his hat when they was singin’ the last hymn, and waited for “amen” like for the word “go,” and was out at the front door before the rest of the people got out of their pews. One evenin’ he knocked a little child over, and never stopped to pick her up — just went ahead like as if the meetin’-house was a-fire and he wanted to git out. Minister Hugue-

not give him fits for it, said it 'wasn't becomin' in an elder,' and that was the first of Mr. Huguenot's trouble with him. I didn't blame the minister much, though, for Strapiron did make a goose out of himself. Why, Mr. Meagre, afore his last wife died he wouldn't blacken his boots—said it was all pride; he used to wear striped cotton trousers that didn't come much below his knees, and a nankeen roundabout with a big hymn-book in the pocket. But as soon as his old woman was in the grave he come out in a suit of black, all except his jacket, that was red and yallar, and he wore a breastpin, and his shoes was as shincy as them little ones of your'n settin there by that bedstead; and he always put cinnamon drops on his handkerchief to make it smell good. Howsomever, as I was sayin', he was monsus anxious to get this gal I am to marry. He went home with her every other Saturday night for two weeks, and went in the first time and axed her to have him afore he was in the house a half an hour."

"Well, every other Saturday night for two weeks is not often, if you consider it right," said the pastor, apologetically, "only once, you know."

"Yaas, but he acted so silly that one time; got down on his knees and cried like a child, and prayed, and threatened to drown himself."

"I hope, sir, that the lady did not tell you these things?" the preacher said, inquiringly.

"Not she. I don't believe she will give me any satisfaction about 'em, even after the weddin'. She

says it aint honorable, and I aint goin' to ax her any questions. You see, Tom Hickman, that's her brother-in-law, know'd Strapiron was a comin', and run home quick and crawled under a settee that had a calico cover in front of the legs, to see and hear the fun. And when the old man took on so, Tom laughed and had to come out, and then he advised the old feller to go in a swimmin'—just to cool himself off, but said there was no use of drownin' himself. Tom is an awful cut up; worse than I am."

"I am not sure," said the clergyman, as gravely as possible, "that your friend Hickman did not go too far. It was not right to hide and listen to what was going on between lovers."

"Mebbe not," answered the man, "but Tom said if he'd a know'd the old man was a going to be so loud, he needn't a got under the settee, and wouldn't a got cotched: he could a just went up stairs and took the board off the pipe-hole."

"That," said Mr. Meagre, "would not have made it any better. Do you think it exactly right to tell on the old gentleman?"

"La, me Mr. Meagre, Tom wouldn't a never told, if the old man hadn't a done it himself tryin' to explain things away to people who was in ignorance of the whole thing. He spread reports in his efforts to conterdict 'em, and now everybody knows that he did act foolish. It stands to reason that was no way to court—all so sudden like. A feller ought to take it

by degrees—a sort of draw 'em on gradually. That's the way I did."

"I am without experience in such matters," said the parson, "and you may be right in your idea of the way things should be done, but I think you can afford to let the elder rest. He is married now, and you ought to leave him out of the question. I suppose you are satisfied, as you are to have Miss Carson for your wife."

"Ya-a-s, s-i-r-e-e-e. She's what I call a raal jewel," exclaimed the man.

"And very elaborately *set*, I should judge, from what you have told me," chimed in Rev. Petit.

"That's true, she set Strapiron a flyin'," quoth the visitor; "said he had too many children. He had three more then than I have now, and I got eight, and most of his'n warn't growed out of the way much."

"Well, eight are enough for any mortal woman to begin with," said the preacher, anxious for a truce. "I do not see how your sweetheart's south-western namesake could manage more. I will be on hand to-morrow evening."

"Very well," said the man, "we'll expect you at three o'clock. Be sure and don't disappoint us," and then he added, in a whisper, "look a here, parson, we want you to keep this affair secret a while, will you?"

"I don't know about that," said Rev. Petit, half fearful of getting into a scrape, and unwilling to be a

party to a clandestine transaction. "I would not like to bind myself. I am under bond to the State and to my conscience not to perform the ceremony under certain circumstances, and the whole idea of keeping marriages secret is rather repulsive to me. I cannot see what object you have in view. Are you not of age?"

"Anybody can see that for himself," said the man.

"And the *other* young lady. How old is she?" inquired the parson.

"Over forty, sir," was the reply.

"Then there can be no objection on that score. Any cruel parents to oppose your youthful love?"

"No, sir, our mummies and daddies is both dead long ago."

"Any tyrannical uncles or aunts threatening to disinherit you?"

"The kitchen's all clear of them things, Mr. Meagre."

"And no legal difficulties in your way?"

"None, whatsoever. To make a clear breast of it, parson, we're afraid we'll get serenaded. Kitty's half skeer'd to death, and I am a little oneasy myself on her account. We had a notion to go down to the State line, but Kitty said it looked too much like runnin' away for her, and they'd be sure to find it out and give it to us when we come home. So we thought we'd get married before night and get a horse and buggy and take a short voyage up the pike, and come back after all the boys is gone to roost. And then

you know I wouldn't keep a lettin' on for some time, till the whole thing blowed over like."

The young servant of the Church found that he had struck a rich vein, and he resolved to open it. "O," he said, "is that the reason you want to be so sly? I should think a serenade would be complimentary."

"So it would, if it was the right sort of a one, such as they give the gov'ner when he was here: but they do it with a horse-fiddle."

"A horse-fiddle! What is that?" asked Rev. Petit, with an air of innocence that would have well become one who did not know.

"Why, bless your soul, it's awful. Never hear one? You know they get out what they calls a Callythumpian band; some people calls it an ox band. They have tin horns, and buckets, and cow-bells, and what's worse, a horse-fiddle. They take a big strong store-box, put about two pounds of rosin on it, and use a heavy scantling for a fiddle-stick. About a dozen catch a hold of each end, and draw it over as if they was gitting out shingle stuff with a crosscut-saw. It does make a power of noise. Elephant grunt aint nothin' to it. So onpleasant too, to one that ain't used to it. The first time I heard one of them things I thought I'd sooner hear a drove of these here shave-tailed Kentucky mules holler. It was up on Turnip Hill, all of the horses got to nickerin' and pawin' in the stables, and the cows was bellowin' all over town. 'Spec' they thought the world was comin' to an end—

was a pretty sharp sprinkle of Millerites in them days anyhow. And it did look strange to see the women and all come out in white, just like that man that preached in the market-house said it would be in the last time. I tell you the whole town was excited in gineral. It was the funniest thing ever heard tell of. Fact is, some of the boys that worked the fiddle got skeer'd themselves at the noise it made and run away. Mayor Stanhope sent the police to stop it, but it wasn't no kind of use. They was too many of us, or rather of them. They was too many of *them*. We all had on old clothes, so that nobody wouldn't know us."

"You mean that *they* all had on old clothes, so that *they* would not be known," interrupted the parson.

"No use, Mr. Meagre, a body will get ketched, and if nobody else don't ketch a feller, he'll be sure to ketch himself."

By this time, Rev. Petit's risibility, which had been kept down with some effort, became uncontrollable. He fell back on the bed and laughed immoderately, and his visitor joined in the chorus. When he had thus relieved himself, he said, "Come now, tell me all about it; were not *you* engaged in that serenade?"

"Well," said the bridegroom elect, blushing, and evidently embarrassed, "it's a queer thing to confess to a minister—didn't 'spec' to do so when I come here, but I don't think you'll judge me hard, or use your influence agin me with Kitty, who thinks a power of you, so I'll own up that I was in that serenade—one of the principal ones, and I afterwards helped to

serenade Strapiron. Had a pig, a screwing its tail that night, to make it squeal."

This last declaration set the little parson off into another fit of laughter, from which it took him some time to recover. "And now, sir," he said as soon as he could regain his gravity, "is not this the ground of your fear, that you will be serenaded?"

"Rather 'spec' they'll be up to givin' old Nick a taste of his own porridge."

"Is your name Nicholas?" asked the minister, gravely.

"No, sir, that's only a sayin' I used just now. My name's Michael, but they call me Mike for short."

"Michael! well, that name savors of something better. I do not wonder at your success; only you should not bring a railing accusation against your adversary, even if he were much worse than he is," said the preacher, anxious to inculcate a lesson. "Still, people *nick*-name you. But you surely do not think that my ruling elder will return your compliment?"

"No, sir. Don't 'spec' he would, but there is plenty that will do it for him. Some of his boys and shop hands would do it unbeknowns to him."

"Well, but I should think you would not mind it if done in the spirit of fun, that is, I do not think you would be offended at it."

"Not me. I'd like it, but then, *Kitty*—she might have her feelins hurt, and I would not have that done for a slate farm. *Kitty's* a good girl, Mr. Meagre, if I am bad. She talked mighty purty to me last night

about jinin' the meetin', and I'm afraid I will have to do it one of these days. It was the first time I cried for a good many years, and I hated to do it; it seemed a kind of weak, but I couldn't help it, and I did try to pray when I went home, but somehow it seemed awkward to me, and yit my conscience would not let me stop."

The man was evidently sincere. A tear had moistened his eye as he spoke these words. Here was a positive character, and the young parson resolved to pay some attention to it. Mike had perhaps been wild in his earlier years, and some traces of a natural disposition and of habit might linger yet; but he respected his intended wife's piety—was frank and open to good influences. And he was about to be surrounded by these good influences.

Now, for the first time, Mr. Meagre identified Kitty Carson in his own mind. "Was she not," he asked, "a large woman who wore a purple bonnet, and a mouse-colored shawl embroidered with silk of a lighter shade?" "Yes;" the man who knew her so "*easy*," said it was she. There could be no mistake this time. The young preacher remembered that he had been introduced to her after service one day, and had formed a good opinion of her. She was always in her seat, seemed to be attentive, modest, and sensible, and she had not been indifferent to the highest interest of him to whom she was affianced—knew that everything depended upon his securing this, and had shown courage enough to speak to him on this

important subject. Here, then, were traces of another positive character — of a good character, too, and the parson took a note of what he had heard, in his mind.

"Now, my dear sir," he said to his visitor, "I hope that when you are married you will continue to listen to your wife. I do not know much about her, but would take her to be a good woman. Let me ask you whether you have been candid with her? Does she know that you have been wild?"

"Yaas, sir," replied the man, "she know'd a good deal and I told her all the rest. Hadn't the heart to keep anything from her, now when I was goin' to marry her. Would as soon think of keepin' her out of her meetin'. She would have married me long ago but for this wildness, cause she know'd I hadn't any spite in what I did. That was one reason, and then my darters. She wouldn't be jined to me as long as they was opposed to it, for she said she didn't believe in a woman's drivin' children out of house and home. But they're all knocked under now, she was so gentle like."

"I respect her all the more for that," the parson said, "but you are certainly old enough to give up some kinds of fun."

"And I am goin' to," he said. "You see, Mr. Meagre, I was raised in this place. When I was young I had nobody to take care of me, and somehow or other I had a nat'ral disposition to cut up Jack. Used to tote store boxes and signs out of their places when I wasn't more nor fifteen years old, and

somehow the thing did not leave me, but grow'd on me till I was over thirty. You know there is one or two such fellers in every neighborhood. Sometimes I'd get on a spree and drink a little, but I have not done much at that for twenty years, only on special 'casions, such as the President's election, camp meetin', and such times. The last time was when Strapiron got married; then a parcel of us fellers did horsefiddle him, not that we had anything agin him, but it did seem funny to see him turn butterfly so soon."

"I am glad to hear," remarked the clergyman, "that you bear no ill will to Mr. Strapiron. I feared from the fact that so much mention was made of him this morning, that there had been more than a generous rivalry between you, and screened him as much as I could, because he was absent, and because he is an elder in my congregation."

"O no. We are good friends. I sat up with him when he had the typhoid fever, and would do anything in the world for him. His wantin' Kitty brought him up somehow this morning, and then I 'spec' they'll serenade me the tallest kind. But I don't care if they do, for I deserve it. Well, ra'ly I must go. Wish I could get out of here without any body's seein' me. Tried to come 'arly this mornin' before many people was about, but then I kind of know'd you was in bed. Been overstayin' my time, too, but we got to talkin', and then I seed Ike Whinny down on the corner and wanted him to go away. You won't disappoint us now?"

"O no, sir; come to see me again."

"I will: good mornin', Mr. Meagre."

"Good morning, sir," said the parson, as from his sitting posture he tried to bow his visitor out of the room.

CHAPTER XII.

THE REHEARSAL: A DILEMMA.

THE Rev. Petit Meagre having been thoroughly awakened by this remarkable interview, got up when his visitor had left, dressed himself, and looked up the form for marriage with all the characteristic interest of a young preacher who has been called upon to perform that important ceremony for the first time. The service was of course a new one to him, and he studied it with all the trepidation of one who wished to avoid mistakes. He was especially anxious to guard against any error that might invalidate the holy rite, and many questions arose in his mind as to what this and that feature of it involved. And then, to guard against mere awkward embarrassment and confusion:—this was a matter that depended in a great measure upon the preacher, and gave the inexperienced brother some concern. For even his old elder, who had been united in the bonds of matrimony about as often as most men, perhaps, got out of practice from one time until an-

other. No one but an old Bluebeard ever expected to be married oftener than the time in hand, and of course no one cares to preserve his dramatic character with a view to anything of the kind in future; that would implicate his present relations sadly. It was therefore probable that, although the groom had been married before, he nevertheless had only a general idea of what was to be gone through with. As for the bride, she might have witnessed many weddings, but had never been married herself, and nothing was to be expected from her in the way of experience. Some things are usually committed to competent bridesmaids, but in this case the candidates for marriage would scarcely have attendants, but do just as the minister would tell them to do, and trust that all would be right.

The little parson felt the weight of responsibility that rested upon him, and in the midst of his first anxiety bethought himself of—pantomime. The first thing to be settled was the position of the parties on the floor. If only he could have given them instructions, all would have been well. But then, even if he could have commanded their presence, he might have tied the knot in the process of practising the ceremony, and thus done away with the necessity of practising, as the end in view would have been accomplished by acts of mere anticipation.

Practising with the parties was then out of the question. The looking-glass, too, to which it is basely said preachers sometimes resort, was now of no avail. To

have consulted one would have been the veriest Irish bull, as the candidates for connubial bliss would have been wanting. Rev. Petit had a notion to call in Mr. Birney's two little children and have them personate the anxious pair, but he remembered that they had gone to school. He next looked for the tongs and shovel, but the weather was warm, and these had been taken out of the room. As a last resort, he wheeled up two stuffed chairs—the big one would be “Mike” and the lesser one “Kitty.” He then commenced to go through with the ceremony, but was brought to a halt in the midst of it by the fact that “Mike” was found to be standing upon the wrong side. This mistake was soon corrected. “Please join your right hands.” The minister had to imagine that gracefully done, and then he saw another breaker ahead. He did not know what form the parties preferred, but as this was only practice, he might ask and then begin again. “Maybe you would like to be married with a ring?” The representatives of “Mike” and “Kitty” were dumb—the proxies could not speak for their principals, and the parson must go and see Mike and Kitty themselves.

And now the truth flashed upon his mind, that during the whole conversation of the morning he had neither asked Mike what his other name was, nor where Kitty lived. “What a man has not in his head he must have in his heels,” was a proverb that came into his mind. He must inform himself on these points, as he did not even know where the ceremony was to

take place, and it would not do to put off these inquiries until the very hour, as he might have some difficulty in having them answered, and delay matters beyond the appointed time. So he took his hat and went in search of his exhibitor — the young deacon.

“Mr. Green,” he asked as he entered the store, “can you tell me where Miss Catharine Carson lives?”

“I don’t know her at all,” he replied.

“O yes, you must know her. She belongs to our congregation,” said the pastor, “you introduced me to her one day after service. She was the only woman at the Wednesday evening lecture, the night of the heavy shower.”

“O, *Kitty Carson*, you mean. They call her *Kit*, and I did not know whom you were after, first, when you called her *Miss Catharine*.”

Mr. Meagre was disposed to think well of the woman, and somehow or other wished that she had another name. To be sure, *Kit Carson* was no worse than *Sally Flailer* or *Polly Parkins*, but an adventurer had given it a questionable notoriety, and it grated on the clerical ear; in fact, it impressed him painfully with the idea that some one had been unsexed.

Mr. Green did not know where *Miss Carson* lived; he had been unable to find out when he was showing the pastor around, but said Mr. Strapiron could tell; “only,” he added, “if you call her *Kitty*, or simply *Kit*, he’ll understand better whom you mean.”

The preacher left the store, hoisted his umbrella over

his head to keep the sun off, and went in search of his elder. He did not find him in his shop; "had just gone up to the house," some one said, and thither the Rev. Petit followed him. Here he came upon the family at dinner, and a large family it was, with journeymen, apprentices, children and all.

"Won't you set up and take a bite?" asked the mistress of the house, as she pushed two or three little ones away from the table to clear a place for him.

"You quality folks don't eat dinner till most night. Rec'on our'n is too early for you," said the elder.

"It is not quite my hour, and I am sorry to disturb you, but I have a little business with you," said the pastor.

"Anything perticler?"

"No, sir: I only wished to ask about some of our members. With your permission, I'll just wait in your front room here until you have dined," said the parson, withdrawing.

In fact, he was just going to inquire for Kitty's whereabouts, when it occurred to him that some impertinent questions might be put to him, and that he would be forced either to prevaricate or betray confidence, and put the boys on the scent of the wedding. To have done so would have been synonymous with telling them to serenade the couple.

The elder soon joined his pastor. He came into the parlor picking his teeth with a fork that he

brought with him from the table, and followed by the little Strapirons, supplied with bread and molasses.

"I have but a moment to stay, sir," said the reverend youth. "I have not yet found out where all of our members live, and come for some information."

"Don't Brother Green know?" said the elder.

"There were some whom he could not find when he went around," replied Mr. Meagre.

"Who are they?"

"Why, for instance, Miss Kitty Carson."

To Rev. Petit's surprise, Mr. Strapiron was taken all aback at the mention of the name, and looked very foolish. "Mr. Meagre," he said, as soon as he had somewhat recovered from his confusion, "are you certain nobody sent you here to ax *me* just for a trick?"

"I am certain, sir," replied the parson, "that your friend Deacon Green sent me here simply, as I thought, because he could not give me the information I wanted himself. If there is any trick in it, I am not a party to it."

"Well, then," said the elder, "you have been sent here by Providence just to give me a chance to explain some things to you. Children, you go out—here, take this fork with you. I'll just shut this door; this is a matter that my wife don't like particlerly to hear about."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE TRIBULATIONS OF ELDER STRAPIRON.

HAVING closed the door securely and looked around as if to assure himself that no other auditor was present, the old gentlemen drew a chair up in front of his pastor, sat down upon it, put his elbows on his knees, and looked over the top of his spectacles, right into the young incumbent's eyes.

"You see," he commenced, "when you came here just now, and mentioned Kitty's name, I thought, mebbe, Minister Huguenot had been telling you something about me and her, and that it was intended to raise another fuss between me and another preacher, or between me and my wife, but I am one of them that believes that whatever is to be, *is*, and now I know Providence sent you to me."

"*Mr. Green* sent me," interrupted the parson, unwilling to hear the old man's yarn, and yet perfectly satisfied that it would be rich.

"But then you know, Brother Meagre, that Providence uses us instrumentally like sun and rain; and no doubt Brother Green was the means of bringing you here just in order that you might learn the truth, and the truth you shall know. You see when my last wife died I was bad off, on account of my motherless

children. True, as Mr. Huguenot said, Granny was here to do everything for them that was needed, and my darter was grown up, but then they had no one to *call* mother. That distressed me. I did not care for inclination, but only sought to know my duty. I sarched the Scriptures, and there I was told marriage is honorable; so I thought it my duty to supply my wife's place, and then I sought out from Providence who I should take for a mother for my babes, and he pinte right to Kitty. She'd come to me in visions of the night. Well, I goes to her and axes her, and she wouldn't have nothin' to do with me. I even got down on my knees to her and wept like a child, Mr. Meagre, and threatened to drown myself—you know Providence directs us to do some very desperate things, and"—

"No Hedon't," exclaimed the clergyman, impatiently.

"Well, just hear me out, Mr. Meagre, and then judge."

Mr. Meagre did so: half worried and half amused, he resigned himself to hear the case, and only hoping that he would not be called upon to give a formal verdict, which he knew would be equivalent to giving offence.

"As I was saying," continued the witness, "Kitty turned a deaf ear to my supplication. She said I was crazy, and that, Mr. Meagre, was no way to rebuke an elder. And then Tom Hickman sarved me a curus trick. He come out from under a settee, and said I ought to go in a swimmin', as if cold water would squench the best feelings of the human heart. Well, this was all of a Saturday night. On Sunday night followin', I got out of meetin' before most anybody else. I axed

her if I moutent go home with her, and she said 'No,' and the next thing I know'd she was going away locked arms with Mike Stoner; and that was what I called being unequally yoked with unbelievers, for Mike is an unbeliever, leastways he aint no member of the church, and got fined once for shooting out old year with a horse pistol.

"Well, when I saw that Kitty was a throwin' herself away, I thought it my duty to try and reclaim her, and I went to my pastor as one of his spiritual advisers, and asked him to interpose with his authority. I pinte out passages of Scriptur', showing him the error of Kitty's ways, and in spite of this he turned around and gave me such a lecture as nobody ever heard. You know Minister Huguenot could do that. He was a good man, Minister Huguenot was, but rather plain-spoken like, and it wasn't very pleasant when he opened on a feller.

"But all this did not dampen my zeal in the good cause of Kitty's welfare. I got a nice red sheet of paper and writ her a letter, telling her just who Mike Stoner was, and how members of the church ought to love one another, and saying that I'd send the two least children up the country with Granny, and bind the boys out, and let my daughter Betsy git married, and wouldn't let the rest *call* her mother if she didn't like it, if she would only take back what she said. And then I puts the letter in a kiver, nice as that one round that valentine on the table there—it cost me a shillin', and I put it in my hat to give it to Mr. Huguenot, and

asked him to give it to Kitty. I know'd she didn't come to the post-office much, and so it might a laid there a week, and that if I sent the children with it she would not take it, and so I thought I would secure my pastor's services.

"Well, I met Mr. Huguenot, and asked him to take the letter to Kitty for me, and he said he wouldn't do no such thing; I was making a goose out of myself, and if I didn't stop my foolishness he'd blow me out of water, and that meant he'd suspend me out of meetin'. Now, mind you, all this was before I had directed the letter. Fact was, I couldn't write well, and was a going to git old Mr. Hearty, the commission merchant, to direct it for me. And when my own minister turned his back on me, I thought I would get Hearty's boy to take it up for me, too; but when I got to his store and took off my hat, I found the letter was gone. Yes, Mr. Meagre, I lost that letter, and what was worse, Mike Stoner found it. You may laugh, as if you don't believe it, or not, but it's just as I tell you.

"Mike said as there was no directions on the letter, and as it wasn't sealed, he read it to find out whose it was, and then took it to Kitty, and axed her to let him publish it in the Gainfield Gazette, with all in about him, if only my name was left to it. But Kitty took it to Minister Huguenot, and said she was pestered almost to death. And then you ought to a heard him. He said I was always twisting Providence into my conceit, and that I wasn't influenced by con-

sideration for my children, and that I pretended to be Mike's friend. I denied at first that I said anything agin Mike, for I had forgot it, I was in so much trouble, and said that I would face Mr. Stoner. So he sent him down with the letter, and advised him not to kick me, though he said he could not hurt him for it if he did, for he was not a church member; but he told him that if he would go home with Kitty every night, it would be purgatory for me. I believe the preacher would have helped Stoner if he hadn't been opposed to interfering one way or other. He liked him because he was a kind of open-hearted feller, that wouldn't hide his worst acts from even a parson. But Kitty will never marry Mike until he promises to jine the meetin'. He's been trying about her for these ten years, and I think she is doing him good. He don't cuss any more, and hasent been on a spree since — well, for a long time, and its hard to make him mad. Even that time he foteh the letter to me, he only just laughed at me, and jumped up and cracked his heels together, and crow'd like a rooster.

“Now, as I said before, these things is just as I tell you. I thought I would just set you right, in case anybody should want to misrepresent things. Did Minister Huguenot tell you anything about it?”

“Not much,” said the young parson. “Not half as much as you have told me, and he did not make it half as bad as you do. I think, perhaps, that your representation is a truthful one.”

“Well, I don't think old Brother Huguenot treated

me quite right. My wife couldn't bear him, and indeed I had a notion to join the New Schools, but I know'd that all the women would be down on me, and so I was determined to maintain my attachment to the Church of my fathers, just for the sake of principle. As for Kitty Carson, I always did say she was a fine woman, though my wife wont hear to it."

"I have just been thinking, Mr. Strapiron," said the little successor of Mr. Huguenot, "that you are married now, and that there is no use to revive your affair with Kitty. I did not ask you to make a father confessor of me."

"Yes, Providence led me to my present wife," said the elder."

"I thought," retorted the clergyman, "that Providence was leading you the other way. But I hope you are satisfied with your present arrangements."

"Yes, for if a man aint satisfied with his wife, it's bad enough."

At this point Mrs. Strapiron entered the room, followed by three or four pledges of love. It is hard to say what disposition they had made of their bread, but the molasses seemed to have been transferred to their faces and clothes. The good lady's liege lord gave Mr. Meagre a sort of wink to drop the subject upon which they had been talking, but Mrs. Strapiron had heard the last sentence of the conversation, and asked, "Who aint satisfied with his wife? Anybody in our church?"

"No," said her husband meekly; "me and our pas-

tor was just saying it was bad enough when a man wasn't. Had no reference to any allusions."

The youthful shepherd arose to leave. Mr. Strap-iron followed him to the door and whispered, "Kitty lives with Tom Hickman, her brother-in-law, next door above old Mr. Huggermugger's. She's a fine woman."

During the long rigmarole that Mr. Meagre had heard, he did his best to preserve his gravity, and only had it upset two or three times; but now being clear from the house, he almost laughed aloud. Miss Ella Tudor and her sister Blanche met him going down town, and afterwards asked him what made him wear such a broad grin that morning. But he could give them no satisfaction without betraying State secrets, and had to put them off by saying, "I have often listened to the gossip of old women, but never before spent a half-day in listening to the gossip of old men."

The young divine had of course gleaned from his elder's conversation, that the surname of the gentleman who visited him that morning was Stoner. He also found out—although he had well nigh come away without finding out—where Miss Carson lived, and he lost no time in repairing to Mr. Hickman's.

"Yes," he was told, "Kit's at home." In the course of his conversation with her, Mr. Meagre told her that Mr. Stoner had called upon him that morning. Having ascertained that she preferred to be married without the ring, he went back to his room and found the chairs as he had left them—as near together as Mike and Kitty were to stand the next day

to have the marriage ceremony performed. This reminded him again of the service, and he studied it until he thought he could render it to the satisfaction of all concerned.

At a quarter before three the next day he tapped again at Tom Hickman's door, and found the parties ready to proceed to business. The ceremony took but little time, and no egregious blunders were committed, although Rev. Petit spoke hurriedly and showed more trepidation than any one on the floor. Mike seemed to be very glad that he was alive, and responded firmly and loudly to the usual questions. Tom Hickman stood behind Kitty, and snatched a kiss from her before her husband had time to release her hand, a feat which the enraptured brother-in-law pronounced a success, by smacking his lips and jumping up and striking his heels together, perhaps as much as Mike had done when he gave the letter to his infatuated rival.

For this "little job," as it was called, Mike deposited in Mr. Meagre's hand two dollars and a half, in one piece of gold.

In a little time a horse and buggy were brought to the door, and the newly married pair "put on their things" and so got ready to start on the contemplated "voyage." Tom brought out a chair to help the bride into the vehicle, and seemed strongly tempted to repeat the strategy he had gone through with in the house. The groom repudiating the chair, put his foot on the hub of the front wheel, and with a remarkable display of agility seated himself by a single spring at the side

of his new wife. As he did so, he said to the parson, "Mr. Meagre, you needn't keep the weddin' a secret if you don't want to. Let 'em come on with their corn-cobs and cart-wheels. I can manage 'em."

CHAPTER XIV.

MUSICAL AND STRATEGICAL.

ABOUT twelve o'clock on the night which followed the espousals of Mr. Stoner, the denizens of that part of Gainfield called Turnip Hill, and, indeed, the inhabitants of all the town, heard loud and horrid noises, announcing to the initiated that there had been a wedding in lower-tendom. Sure enough, tin horns and frying-pans, dinner-bells, sleigh-bells, cow-bells, every conceivable kind of bell, from the tintinnabulum to a large factory bell which had been swung on a frame, and wheeled up with much difficulty for the occasion — a greater variety of instruments than sounded on the plains of Dura, when the Chaldean monarch commanded the golden image to be worshipped, gave out their grating discords. Far above everything else, like thunder above the din and confusion of drays and carts in a city, arose the coarse notes of the veritable horse-fiddle. All the elements seemed to be mingled in wild strife, and this was the

bass of the vast anthem. Only one sound seemed to be wanting — the squeal of a pig, a deficiency attributable, perhaps, to the fact that the performer on that instrument had another engagement. In lieu of this, however, some one had gone out to Joe Wallach's and brought in a pack of hounds, which sagacious animals instinctively responded to the horns and helped to make confusion worse confounded; and Tom Hickman, it was said, borrowed a calf from a young butcher, and laid it under contribution before it was yielded to the shambles.

Mr. Meagre had not yet retired when the band struck up. He could hardly resist the temptation to go down and witness the commotion, but feared that his reputation would not bear it. Had his character been as well established as that of some of his professional brethren, he perhaps would have gone, but he recently had "shown the white feather," as Mr. John Flailer said, by playing ball, and it might now be supposed that he was an open and strenuous advocate of calathumpian bands. He had to content himself, therefore, with walking a square or two in the direction from which the sounds proceeded, and asking a watchman, innocently, what it all meant.

"They are ox-banding Mike Stoner," said the man of the star — he had no rattle, and the parson had strong suspicions that the guardian of the peace had lent it away. "He was married to-day. Don't be skeer'd, sir. Won't be anybody hurt. It ain't no riot."

"But, captain," said the unsophisticated preacher, "it is an indignity to Mr. Stoner. Ought not you to stop it? If you want a *posse*, I"—

"O no," he replied quickly, "they's animals enough without that. Possums would'nt be good for much at a serenade, 'cept you'd hold 'em on a pole above the dogs, and they're in full blast anyhow. Hear 'em?"

Rev. Petit *wilted*. He now felt how liable the best words and acts of a minister were to misapprehension and misconstruction by the ignorant. Here he offered, though he knew the offer would be declined, to help to quell the disturbance, and this municipal officer knew so little law Latin, that he understood him as wishing him to furnish an opossum to make things worse. But then it occurred to his reverence that he was perhaps "playing possum" himself, and that as, according to his own construction, he had offered himself, the watchman was not very wide of the mark, however unwittingly the bow had been drawn. He therefore resolved to go home, willing to compromise with the man of the baton, and determined to say nothing about the matter even to Dr. Kay. As he turned on his heel to depart, he remarked that he hoped Mr. Stoner would not be annoyed too much.

"Don't be alarmed," was the reply. "Bet my watch agin a turnip, that Mike's in his house there, enjoying the fun more nor anybody else."

The next afternoon the parson met his patron on

the street. "Good morning, Mr. Stoner," he said, "How is your wife?"

"First rate, I'm obliged to you," answered the newly married man.

"Well, they did serenade you last night," said the preacher.

Mike gave Rev. Petit a familiar though respectful wink, and replied in a low tone of voice, "They thought they did, Mr. Meagre, but I outginerall'd the whole party. Sold 'em bad. But you mussent say anything about it just now, or they'll pay me back yit."

There is no use to deny it; Mr. Meagre yielded to the weakness that always was his besetting sin. He could not help but ask Mike how he had managed his forces, and Mike was too glad to have some one to whom he could safely tell the fun, to withhold the information long.

"Well," he said, evidently speaking confidentially, "I'll tell you how I fixed 'em. I changed my whole plan after I left you yesterday morning. I know'd they'd find me out, for Ike Whinny see'd me go into your room, and smelt the rat directly, and I was sartain they wouldn't leave my trail a minnit. Then my whole arrangement was altered all of a suddint, and I wanted 'em to find the weddin' out, only I kept a lettin' on tother way.

"Well, after we was married and got out of town, I ses to Kitty: 'Kitty, we'll have to come back sooner than we thought to, but you shan't suffer no annoyance

from them fellers, because of my 'sociations and sins. Only just let me manage it. Me and Tom 'ill be too many for 'em. It's all planned.'

"We got back to town about dusk, and I let Kitty out at Hickman's where we started from, and I took the horse home down the alleys, as if I wanted to be sneakin,' 'cause I know'd they was lookin' for me, and would think I wanted to escape. I saw some of 'em peepin' round the corner when I let Kitty out at Tom's, and then they went away satisfied; and when I come to the Liberty stable, Sam Crimp come out of the grannery, and said, 'Mike, I wish you much joy.' Then I knowed what to expect.

"'Sam,' ses I, a kind of innocent like, 'I knock under. I promised Kitty I wouldn't drink any more, and I wont; but I'll stand treat to the whole party if you let me off.'

"'No sir-e-e,' said Sam, 'not for all the rifle whisky in Gainfield.'

"Well, I goes back to Hickman's, and takes Kitty out the back gateway, around by the Hicksite meetin'-house, down to my house in Kemp street, and tells her to keep the front windows dark. Then I goes back, and about ten o'clock takes a candle up stairs, shuts the shutters myself, and blows the light out. After that I slips down, went home the back way again, and waits for the fun. This was just before Tom went to tell the boys all was ready; for if he hadn't been with 'em they'd a spected somethin', and so we had made out that he was to jine in with 'em.

"About midnight they commenced. I histed the winder and listened. It was so good that I couldn't stand it. So I put some old clothes on, and went up to see who they was, and what they was doing. The first one I saw was Jake Strapiron with the identical old clothes on that his daddy wore before his wife died — striped pants, nankeen wammus, bell-crowned hat and all. I was certain at first, that it was old Absalom himself. The way I know'd it wasn't was, he hadn't the hymn-book.

"Well, they was weak of hands at the fiddle, and I jined in and helped 'em. 'Give it to 'em, fellers,' says I, as I pulled the scantlin'.

"'Yes,' says Jake; 'I want to pay Mike Stoner for what he give the old man.'"

"Did they not know you?" asked the parson, nearly convulsed with laughter.

"No, indeed," said Mike, "I changed my voice, but once I was most betrayed — when Tom came up with that calf, pushin' it by the ear and tail to get it near enough. You see that was a new wrinkle to me, and Tom didn't 'spec' to see me, but we soon give one another the wink. All the rest thought they was givin' it to me and Kitty, but they was ox-bandin' the empty house, and I was helpin' 'em. But don't say anything about it, Mr. Meagre, just yet, if you don't want all the people of Kemp street to lose another night's rest."

"Why," asked the preacher, "is there any danger that they will repeat the serenade?"

"If they find out that they have been sold, they will, but I don't think they will find it out, unless Tom wants some more fun. He is apt to joke both ways. Howsomever, he went up to Newport to tend the bricklayers this afternoon, and won't be home for a week."

"Then I should judge you safe," quoth Rev. Petit.

"Not if the idee strikes Tom," said Mike; "for he'll turn back, and then go up agin to-morrow mornin'. Don't think there's much danger though. Tom has great respect for Kitty, or else he wouldn't a helped to spare me last night. And then he wants to run the boys. Me and Tom will plague 'em enough, if they say anything to us about it. I 'spec', Mr. Meagre, it was wrong for me to deceive 'em, and 'specially to jine in, but that's my last fun at a sere-nade."

"I hope so, Mr. Stoner," said the parson. "You remember your promise to your wife."

"Yes, and if I don't keep it I hope I may never taste another piece of tobacco. I promise you both that I will try to do better," said Mike; and he kept his word.

Now, when Mrs. Strapiron heard of the wedding, she declared that "Kit Carson only married Mike Stoner because she could not get a certain elder, after whom she was perfectly crazy, and that if Mike hadn't been stupid, he'd a know'd it."

The elder himself was on his way to the country next morning, when he heard that the serenade the night before had been given in honor of his friend. He re-

marked: "Hadn't heard it before. Jake and the other boys didn't know what the noise was about this mornin' at breakfast. My wife said she'd go out and see if the neighbors know'd, but I couldn't stop to hear the news. Mike Stoner and Kitty Carson! well I declare. Providence is strange."

That day the elder cut his foot with an adze, and his amiable spouse avowed that the accident was a judgment upon the husband for complicity with the preacher in keeping the knowledge of the intended marriage from her. The poor man defended himself against the charge by saying that the parson had maliciously deceived *him*, and in order to prove to his wife that he was an injured man, he publicly threatened to leave the church. But to this, Mrs. Strapiron replied: "You can't deceive me that way. Me and you has both talked that way to skeer the preachers. I heard enough to convince my own ears, that the preacher *did* tell you about the wedding. You were a talkin' about people's being dissatisfied with their wives after they *was* married, and if that don't apply to Mike Stoner I don't know who it does apply to. And then you went out and whispered something to Meagre, and wouldn't let me know what it was, though I pestered you for an hour."

Mr. Strapiron, in his efforts to convince his dear partner that he was a victim of circumstances, or rather of "the minister's hypocrisy in pretending that nothing was going on," succeeded in convincing *himself* that he had suffered martyrdom at the hands of

his pastor. In proof of his conclusions, he quoted from Ezekiel and other parts of the Bible, and was more fully settled than ever in the opinion that the Scriptures were true, by the fact that he saw them so palpably fulfilled. His threat to tear himself from the church, and bear testimony against a wolf in sheep's clothing, in that particular way, was never carried into effect, however, owing to the fact that the parson did not become frightened, and, indeed, took no notice of it, and thus allowed the excitement to die out.

Mr. and Mrs. Stoner, whose lawful union created such a sensation among the boys, and had well nigh unsettled some of the members of the church, like all married people at the end of a novel, ceased to be talked about, except that they were, perhaps, referred to in an occasional curtain lecture. As said before, Mike kept the promise he gave to his wife and to her pastor. He attended church regularly, and in the course of time became a regular communicant, and a very consistent Christian. He afterwards set his heart on getting his friend Hickman into the church, declaring that "Tom would make a first rate deacon, if he'd settle down a few years and get the confidence of the people. It wouldn't do to put him in right at first, for if he'd happen to spill the cents takin' up collections, everybody would say he did it on purpose."

In this way of exerting good influence upon his friend, Mr. Stoner was, of course, encouraged by the parson, who thought that if he succeeded, he, as well as Kitty, would be entitled to canonization.

CHAPTER XV.

MEAGRE'S DISCIPLE.

"I think, Mr. Middleton," said the young parson one November morning, as he entered the drawing-room, "that if you can let me have the old horse, I will go to the country to-day and see some of our members."

"I have arranged to put the horse at your disposal for a week," said Mr. Middleton. "I think, too, that you had better do some of your pastoral visiting without delay: winter is coming on, the weather will soon be cold and the roads bad."

"Yes," said Mrs. Middleton, "it is rather cool this morning, although the sun shines so brightly; I fear that you will experience rough winds before night. But I have made you a pair of nice leggins, and bought you a pair of buckskin gauntlets, and I hope you will not suffer much if, in addition to these, you wear your overcoat and cap. That shiny hat looks very pretty, but you may have some difficulty in keeping it on your head. I will hurry up the breakfast and give you an early start, so that you can get home before night. Mr. Meagre, do not stay too late, or I will be uneasy about you. Sooner come back and go again in the morning."

Mr. Meagre thanked Mrs. Middleton for her kind consideration in providing the leggins and the gloves. "You are always doing such things for me," he said, "and I am humbled by the thought that your generosity is so largely taxed on my behalf, but I trust that God will reward you for it. I hope, however, you will not give yourself undue anxiety about my comfort or safety. I am not to ride the colt to-day, and expect to have my feet on the fender at dusk this evening."

"I hope that if ever you do ride the colt again, he will return you in better condition than formerly," said the good lady. "But Dr. Arlington says you have improved wonderfully in your horsemanship: you know he rode with you the last time you were here."

"I thank the Doctor for his compliment," said the little parson, "and will try to sustain my reputation."

After a good hot breakfast Rev. Petit mounted the gentle old horse, and proceeded to hunt up the members of his flock among the hills and pines around Pumbeditha. The day was spent in going from house to house, talking, reading, and praying with the people. Nothing unusual occurred in the earlier part of the day. Towards evening, however, when on his way home, it occurred to the young preacher that he would yet visit the only remaining family living in that direction from Pumbeditha, and save himself a ride back into that neighborhood the next morning. This was the house at which the little dog had disturbed the young parson's prayers. This time, how-

ever, the mistress of the house took the precaution to pen Pinkey up in the stair steps, and having thus relieved her pastor of some apprehensions, sat down on the opposite side of the chimney to hear what he had to say. As she did this, she took from the mantle a short-stemmed pipe that had evidently been in use for some time, cut some tobacco fine with a Barlow knife, rubbed it finer in the palm of her hand, and having stuffed it into the bowl with her little finger, raked up a coal, put her elbows on her knees and puffed away slowly and majestically.

"Where is Mr. Stemple this evening?" asked the parson, after they had been talking some time. "I saw him in church the last time I held service in Pumbeditha, and would like to encourage him to come again."

Mrs. Stemple was evidently embarrassed by his question, and hesitated about answering it. She thus excited a fear in the young preacher's mind that something was wrong, as her husband, like many men of his age in that community, had once been a frequenter of taverns, and it was said that the habits of his earlier years had not been altogether abandoned in the later part of his life.

"Mrs. Stemple," said Mr. Meagre, "you have often expressed anxiety to me about your husband. I am anxious to do him good, and I hope you will be candid with me as far as you can be. Has Mr. Stemple gone on a frolic?"

"No indeed, Mr. Meagre," said the woman, "and

I hope he never will do so again. If only you keep on noticing him I think he will come to church regular, and mebbe jine the meetin' one of these days. To tell the honest truth, he's gone down to old Cain Mongrel's below here. The old man's crazy from drinkin', and they think he won't get over it; but I did not like to tell you, bekase I was afeerd you'd go down there and git hurt; for Mongrel's desperit, and does nothing but curse preachers and threaten 'em."

"I will go and see Mr. Mongrel," said the young parson, taking up his cap and gloves and moving towards the door. "I can finish my visit to you some other time."

"O, Mr. Meagre, don't go," said the fearful woman, taking her pipe out of her mouth and following him out of the house. "Mongrel will curse you for all that's bad."

"His curses will be very harmless, madam," said the preacher.

"Yes, but he'll kill you if he can, and then his house bears such a bad name with that old woman, and her daughter there. It's no place for a preacher to go!"

"I am not afraid of being killed," replied the parson, smiling. "Nor am I afraid that my reputation will suffer for going where my duty calls me. Where is the house?"

"There it is," said the woman, pointing with the stem of her pipe to a low cabin away off in an open field, by the edge of the woods.

"Can I ride down there?" asked the parson.

"Yes, if you let down the bars by the barn here. The field runs away up here, you see. But you better not go; the dogs are uncommon cross."

"I am more afraid of the dogs than anything else, madam; but your husband will keep them from hurting me."

"There goes my old man now," said the old lady, pointing to a person that came out of the cabin and took off through the woods. "He's going to the cross-roads for the doctor, I'se warrant you, and all the dogs a follerin' him; you see they are often up here, 'cause they're most starved at home, and are kind of 'quainted with us."

"I am glad they are following your husband," said Rev. Petit, "as they will not now be likely to annoy me."

"Well, Mr. Meagre," said the good woman, "if you will go, I hope you'll have good luck, but I'm afeerd not. If Mrs. Middleton know'd this, she'd be awful oneasy. Believe she thinks as much of you as she does of that little twelve-year-old grand-darter of her'n, that's growin' up around her there."

"Mrs. Middleton is certainly very kind to me," replied the little parson, "and perhaps all the more so because she thinks me disposed to be faithful in every duty."

By this time the young preacher had mounted his horse. The old lady laid her pipe on the ledge of the bakeoven, saying that she did not like to take it

so near to the barn, and followed her pastor to let down the bars, so that he "need not light off."

"You've got a deal of spunk, Mr. Meagre, for a little man," she said: "aint afeerd to go to see the cholera, crazy people nor nothin'."

"O no," replied he, as the horse stumbled over the rails she had lowered. "You people, perhaps, overestimate the danger to which we ministers are exposed; and at any rate we are not to shrink from anything, but put our trust in God."

Mrs. Middleton's predictions in regard to the weather were now being verified, for it had become uncomfortably cold. Besides, night had come on suddenly, as it often seems to do when the days have been shortened by the changing seasons: still here was a work that could not be delayed, for to-morrow might be too late.

As the young preacher rode through the field, he was impressed with the dreariness of the scene by which he was surrounded. The purple glories of autumn had fallen to the ground, and the wind roared through the bare woods, bending the sturdy trees before the blast. The sun had gone down an hour before, and the moon had not yet arisen. Dark wintry clouds floated across the sky, often obscuring the few stars that twinkled in the silence of the infinite. The only light that he had to guide him was that which gleamed through the tattered roof and open crevices of the hovel, making it look more like a huge lantern than a human dwelling. Indeed it was a wild, weird

scene that presented itself to his view — that miserable hut, in the open field on the margin of the wilderness, lit up by a fitful glare, as if the witches, long banished from Pumbeditha, had taken up their abode in that dreary place, and were uttering their voices in the moaning winds. But he had no need to draw upon his imagination, in order to invest the scenes and incidents before him with dreary interest. There was a sad reality about them which could not be heightened. He was approaching a habitation of guilt, where a long life of crime was about ending in curses, and Nature seemed to be wailing a requiem over fallen, impenitent man. Oh! to die at all seems hard at times, but to die in the midst of such scenes, and without God and without hope in the world, has a terribleness about it which no thought or imagination can increase.

As there was no fence about the house, except on the side towards the woods, Mr. Meagre rode quite up to the door. Indeed, the horse put his fore feet on the broad limestone slab that had been placed there as a sort of step, and the clatter of the ironed hoof brought an old woman to the rude aperture of the hovel. She put out her head and said, "Tie your horse to the plum tree at the gable end of the house, and come in;" then withdrew into the house, closing the door after her, and leaving the minister out in the dark. He succeeded, however, in finding the tree; tied the horse, and entered the cabin.

At first the light blinded him, but he retained his

presence of mind, so as to be ready for any emergency, although he did not expect any formidable encounter. For the scene that presented itself within that little casement of old logs, Mr. Meagre was in some measure prepared. It corresponded somewhat with the outward appearance of things, and yet strange sensations took possession of him at first. For an instant he forgot the old man whose malady had brought him there, and who was now lying quietly in an obscure corner of the room. This afforded the clerical visitor an opportunity to take some notice of the other inmates of the house.

CHAPTER XVI.

MR. MONGREL AND HIS FAMILY.

THERE was a large fireplace at one end of the hut, built of stones that had long been darkened by smoke and the prints of greasy hands. On the hearth was a fire of faggots, which gave heat and light to those in the house. At one side of the hearth, on a low stool, sat the old woman who had opened the door, a living representation of the word "crone," and at the other side an idiot girl, deaf and dumb, as the young preacher soon found out. Behind these, three children, one a bright-eyed little lass, sought to hide

and shelter themselves, as if they feared the slender preacher's voice more than the maniac ravings that had just ceased; and a stalwart woman, of about thirty-five years, stood in the middle of the room as if she had been struck stiff and mute by a sudden apparition. A doorless cupboard, containing a few dishes, two old chests, three crazy chairs, and a miserable bed on which the poor inebriate lay, these, together with a large rough ash-hopper, made up the furniture. Various articles of female attire hung around on the logs of which the hut was built, and many rags had been used to supply the place of chinking and daubing, in the vain effort to keep out the cold.

"Good evening," said Mr. Meagre.

This salutation was acknowledged only by a vacant stare, and the parson had to begin again.

"I heard," he said, "that Mr. Mongrel was ill, and came to see if I could do anything for him."

"You are the doctor's student, aint you?" asked the woman who stood in the floor, placing her arms akimbo. "Rec'on the doctor couldn't come when Stemple told him old man was so bad, and sent you."

"I am not the doctor's student," replied Mr. Meagre, "I am"——

"O, I know who he is, Madge," broke in the old woman, shaking her skinny finger at the stripling clergyman, but addressing the standing woman. "He's the little preacher that speaks at Pum'ditha; I seed him when I was in town the last time, but he

didn't see me, and if he'd a know'd all, he wouldn't a wanted to know me."

"My presence here to-night," said Mr. Meagre, "is enough to show you that I am willing to give you any aid in my power."

"You don't deny, then, that you are the preacher?" asked Madge.

"Certainly not, and I have as much to do here as any doctor in the world."

This announcement seemed to create some consternation, but Mr. Meagre broke the silence by saying: "I am here in the name of my Lord and Master, to offer to you and that sick man full and free salvation, if you will only take it." Then turning to the old woman, he asked, "Are you Mrs. Mongrel?"

"Bin living with him nearly all my life. They call me old Mink."

"And who are you?" he asked of the younger woman.

"I am their daughter, and these are my children," was the reply.

"And who is this poor girl?" asked Mr. Meagre, looking kindly at her as if waiting a reply.

"She can't hear or speak," said Madge. "She's my sister, I 'spec'."

The young parson turned sadly away. "Is Mr. Mongrel asleep?" he asked, remembering that his immediate mission was with him.

"Only stupid, I guess," said Madge.

"Well, I want to speak to him, if he is at all in a

condition to hear me," said the parson. "Have you a candle? I want to see his face, and I want him to see mine."

"I'll light up the lamp," said the woman, taking down an old black one suspended by links of stiff wire, the end one of which was pointed and stuck into the cracks of the stones in the chimney.

"You had better get near the lather, so you can run up the loft," said the old woman. "He can't foller you there."

"There is no more danger for me here than for you," said Rev. Petit.

"He run us both up there to-day," replied the old woman. "It was a good thing the children was out huntin' chestnuts."

By the time the old lady had made these pleasing announcements, Madge, as she was called, had filled the lamp with something that she dignified by the name of fat, picked the wick with the end of the wire, lit it, and was moving cautiously to the couch of the sick man. Mr. Meagre followed her, and as he looked upon the abject victim of disease, stretched upon his miserable bed, he thought that he had never seen a more pitiable object — no, not even in the city hospitals and almshouses, where a great deal of misery had come under his notice.

The poor man had lost all the hair from the lashes of his inflamed and bloodshot eyes, and shrank from the light in evident pain. The young clergyman shielded him from the glare of the lamp with his hand.

"Take it away," he said to the woman, "stick it in the log behind those clothes; screen it in some way or blow it out, and put more faggots on the fire, and we will have light enough."

He then drew up a chair near to the bed, and asked kindly, "Have you much pain, Mr. Mongrel?"

"No," replied the man, bluntly.

"Have you been asleep?"

"Heard everything was going on among you folks out there," was the reply.

"Then you know who I am and what I came for," said the young preacher.

"Yes," replied the man, "and I tell you that you are a very smart man to come just now when the spell's gone from me, or me and you'd a both been buried together to-morrow out under the big oak in the middle of the road. I had a notion all day that you were about, and run out and got the old sickle that stuck in the log at the end of the house, to fix you off, and they couldn't get it away from me, neither."

"Where is the sickle?" asked Mr. Meagre.

"Here it is," said he, pulling it out from the ragged bed-clothes.

"Now just give it to me," said the preacher.

"I might as well," said the poor man, handing it over. "Everything is agin me."

CHAPTER XVII.

MR. MONGREL AND THE TWO PHYSICIANS.

THE young preacher took the sickle and for an instant thought of keeping it for his own defence, but immediately gave up the idea as unworthy and unwise; so he gave it to Madge and directed her to throw it away. "I am not against you, Mr. Mongrel," he said, "and a greater One than I am will not be against you, if you will only turn to Him and live."

"Who's that?" he asked.

"He who made you and is anxious to save you: 'God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.' You said something about being buried to-morrow, and I suppose you have an idea that you may not live long, but what is to become of you after death? That is the great question now. Do you think you will go to heaven when you die?"

"I expect to get there as soon as the breath leaves my body," said he.

"What makes you think so?" asked the parson. "Do you think you have ever done anything to earn heaven?—do you expect to go there because of your good works?"

“Can’t work much now,” he said, “but when I was a young man I got out all the stones in Middleton’s smokehouse in three days, and had to open the quarry at that.”

The doctor, who had come in while this conversation was going on, seemed highly amused at this last observation. To Mr. Meagre, however, it was no subject of merriment. The poor man’s ignorance was deplorable. The young parson had perhaps no difficulty in his own mind in regard to one thing: whether quarrying stones rapidly and well, if done in the temper of one who tries to fulfil his duty to his neighbor—whether such deeds, as the fruits of the Spirit, might not be ranged in the catalogue of good works as well as professed acts of penance and charity, was a question of easy solution. But Mr. Mongrel, perhaps, had no such ideas of things—no conception of the moral qualities of actions. To enlighten him, and to present to him the simple truths of revealed religion in such a way that he might, by the blessing of the Holy Spirit, be made wise unto salvation, was now the great concern of the young incumbent.

“Mr. Mongrel,” said he, “when you quarried those stones you perhaps were anxious to do a good day’s work for Mr. Middleton, and that was all very well, for it ought to be a part of religion; or you may have been simply anxious to show people how much you could do with a pick and shovel, but had you the fear of God before your eyes, and did the love of Christ constrain you?”

“Was tight, and cursing all day,” he replied.

“Well, now, if you had not tasted a drop of liquor nor sworn an oath that day, or in all your life; if you had not done anything that men could find fault with, and if you had tried in your own strength to do what God commanded you to do, you would not have been able to earn Heaven. No man could earn favor in God’s sight in that way. Good works are all well enough; they are necessary as the fruits of a new life, but you must first take the new life itself from God as alms, and that too in His own way. The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Mr. Meagre then proceeded to tell the poor man of Christ, Who He was and what He had done for him; and of the Holy Spirit, Who was to dispose and enable him to repent and believe. There was a strange mixture of ignorance and shrewdness manifested in the remarks with which the poor invalid interrupted the instructions given to him. His mind seemed to be altogether uninformed on these subjects; there had, perhaps, never been that lodgment of precious truth in his heart which so often proves available to the minister of the Gospel, and to those with whom he has to do, after it has lain apparently forgotten for many years. And yet there were not wanting those brilliant scintillations which so often emanate from the human brain in its frenzied state. Sometimes the inexperienced young pastor was sadly embarrassed by the low, grovelling conceptions the man had of religion, and then again he was put to his wit’s end by a bright

repartee. This embarrassment was increased by the fact that he did not know how far he could depend upon the poor inebriate's sanity.

The bullion the young parson had brought from the seminary in the way of a system of theology, had to be coined for circulation and use. Clinical preaching seemed to be a different thing even from pulpit preaching, and yet he was more fully impressed with the entire adaptation of the plan of salvation to the real wants of man that night, in that lonely hut, than he had ever been impressed with it before. The *facts* connected with the mediatorial work of Christ—the birth, life, death, resurrection, and intercession of the Incarnate God, whereby the redemption of human nature was actually accomplished in His Person, and the office of the Holy Spirit in making this available for any man, by repeating in him, as a member of His body mystical, all that He had fulfilled as the living Head,—these truths, these facts, seemed all sufficient. And these truths had been so clearly set forth by Holy Writ, that the young minister had only to repeat them in the words of the Sacred Scriptures in order to meet the demands of the case. Indeed, there was more than a compensation for his own want of experience and tact, not only in the nature of God's plan of salvation, but in the way in which He had declared it. He therefore quoted passages from the New Testament, in the way of mere assertion, selecting those in which the *grace* of God was more particularly set forth, as divinely constituted to challenge faith, and looked to the Sanc-

tifier for a blessing. The parable of the one lost sheep, simply read without a word of human comment, seemed to the young parson to have a wondrous beauty and power in it. It brought to his own mind a new realization of the full import of the word "*Gospel*," and he resolved that the lesson then taught him should not be lost sight of in the public ministrations of the sanctuary. And the simple assertion of God's proffered mercy, of Christ's seeking love, seemed to rivet the sick man's attention, allaying his fears and soothing his mind in such a way as to attract the notice of the attending physician.

"I am afraid, doctor," said Mr. Meagre to him, "that I may be taxing the strength of your patient too heavily. He is very weak, and I had perhaps better hand him over to you for the present."

"I think, Mr. Meagre," replied he, "that you are perhaps doing the man more good than I could do him. I do not know how to account for it, but he is more rational and composed now than he has been for three days. I do not think that it is altogether physical reaction either: that would have prostrated him more. It is hard to say what ought to be done, as it would scarcely be safe to risk a stimulant, and opiates have lost their power upon him. Everything depends upon his being kept quiet, for if he becomes delirious again, he will never be able to rally from the effects of it. I doubt whether he will live until the morning in any case."

"Then I will at least commend him to God's mercy

and grace," said the young clergyman; and kneeling down on the damp earthen floor, he offered up a fervent prayer, probably the first that had ever been heard in that cabin, although it was now rotting down with age.

When the young pastor arose from his knees, he observed that the doctor had bowed his head during the prayer, but the wretched inmates of the house had not assumed anything like a reverential posture.

"I hope, Mr. Meagre," said the physician, "that you will excuse me if I seemed to be amused at some things here to-night. I am sorry that I allowed myself to be betrayed into such manifest impropriety, but I meant no disrespect to the religion you represent, nor to the poor man whose misery ought to be pitied rather than laughed at. I hope, sir, that my disclaimer of any intentional irreverence will be sufficient."

"Certainly, sir," replied the young parson, "I can readily understand how strangely some things struck your mind, as I have myself a very keen sense of the ridiculous, which often gives me trouble—never, however, with such scenes before me as those we have witnessed during the last few hours. I have an oppressive sense of responsibility which often checks my disposition to run into folly."

"Since I have been here," said the doctor, after a moment's pause, "I have wondered why it is that ministers of the Gospel and physicians do not see more 'eye to eye' than they do."

"I do always try to see eye to eye with every physician that I am accustomed to meet in the sick chamber," said the preacher. "I find it an advantage to me in my ministration of holy things, and not unfrequently to the persons to whom I minister."

"And in this case, at least, I hope it will be of some profit to the physician," said the doctor.

"I am glad to hear you say so," said Mr. Meagre. "You, I believe, are Doctor Banks?"

"Yes, sir," said he, acknowledging the recognition with a bow. "I have an office at Carlton's Cross Roads, about a mile from here. I am glad to meet with you, sir, although I regret the sad occasion that has called us together to-night."

It was now Mr. Meagre's turn to bow, which he did, extending his hand at the same time. "I hope," he said, "we will meet often, and that under more pleasant circumstances, although I do not regret that we have become personally acquainted with each other at a post of duty; and I hope that our coming here will yet be an advantage to the sick man. By the way, doctor," he added, "physicians ought to be among the most faithful Christians in the world. There is an awful responsibility resting upon those who are necessarily thrown so much with the sick and the dying. For my part, I do not see how one in your profession can rest, when even after performing a great duty by doing all in his power for the bodies of men, he yet neglects a greater duty that he owes to

their souls, and allows them to go all sin-sick into eternity without an effort to save them."

"I have often thought of that, Mr. Meagre," said the doctor, "and do not think I will be apt to think less of it after having met you here this evening. I think that you will, at least, find me sympathizing with you in your holy mission in this neighborhood. It is as you say; a man's spiritual interests are his highest interests. God grant that I may not neglect my own even in the midst of engrossing professional duties."

"I can readily say 'amen' to that prayer for your self," said the parson. "Our professional duties often lead us to conceive of the various departments of man's being as altogether independent of each other, and this again leads us to a one-sided view of our duty. It is well enough, perhaps necessary, for us to have specialties. The minister of the Gospel has an office given to him by the Church, the functions of which it would not be safe for every one to assume; and so the physician has a duty to perform, the responsibilities of which ministers generally could not undertake, but still all the parts of our being are organically united, and only in this may constitute the *man*. It was the whole man that Christ redeemed, and it is with the whole man that we have to do in our mission. If that poor man's soul is saved, it will of course involve the redemption of his body from the power of corruption. I claim that in the second Adam we will regain everything

that we lost in the first, and with all due respect for your laws of hygiene and medical science, the best thing you can do for the final restoration of that diseased body, is to be the instrument of making it a fit habitation of God through the Spirit. But we may have an opportunity to speak of these things again. Just now I am interested in this miserable family. Do you know anything of its history?"

"Not much, sir," was the reply. "I only know that it has had no very enviable reputation."

"And is there no one to stay here to-night with the sick man but these unfortunate women?"

"Mr. Stemple and his farm hand will be here after a little while," said the doctor; "and they *may* have but little trouble with the patient if he gets to sleep, as I now hope he will. He will scarcely survive many days, however."

"In the meantime I will be glad to do anything I can for him," said the parson, "but I do not see that I can do anything more for him to-night, and if he is cared for I would like to get back to the village. I have Mr. Middleton's horse here without shelter, and fear that there will be some anxiety about me."

"You will hardly find your way back alone, although the moon shines out at times now," said the doctor; "but if you will wait a moment I will pilot you part of the way, and then you will have no difficulty. I hear those men coming now."

The sick man soon fell asleep, and the young parson left with the doctor, promising to return in the morn-

ing, but half fearful that death would close the drama of the poor inebriate's existence before the night was over. The doctor, who had tied his horse in the woods outside of the fence, let down a pair of bars, in order that the parson might go with him by a nearer road than that which ran round by Mr. Stemple's house. They rode together until they came to the Cross Roads, from which point Mr. Meagre had no trouble in finding his way back to Pumbeditha. It was long after midnight when he got there, yet he found Mr. and Mrs. Middleton waiting for him, all the more anxiously because they had received some intimation of where he had gone, and feared, from what they knew of old Mr. Mongrel, that their pastor might have an adventure.

The young parson felt a glad relief when he found himself "at home" in Mr. Middleton's house. For the comforts which there surrounded him he felt devoutly thankful. The scenes through which he had just passed came up before his mind, and presented a singular contrast. While a piece of toast was being prepared for him, he sat down before the hickory fire, and covered his face with his hands. Mrs. Middleton thought him despondent, but her kind-hearted, hopeful husband, who sat near her, placed his hand upon the young man's curly head, and said: "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand, for thou knowest not whether shall prosper either this or that, or whether both shall be good alike."

The next morning Mr. Meagre went back to the

hovel and found the old man alive. The slumber into which he had fallen the night before had not yet been broken. Towards evening he awoke apparently much refreshed. Mrs. Middleton sent him some gruel which strengthened him greatly; and although life seemed to ebb and flow for several days, at the end of a week the aged invalid was sitting up by the fire of faggots in his cabin.

Of course the young parson paid every attention to the poor man, and was sorry on his account when obliged to leave Pumbeditha for Gainfield. Upon his return to the neighborhood, Mr. Mongrel was the first person after whom he inquired, and he was glad to hear that he survived and was convalescent. "He has not been able to get out of the house yet," said Mr. Middleton, "but that has, perhaps, been fortunate, as he might have run into dissipation and put an end to his life."

CHAPTER XVIII.

WITCHCRAFT.

BUT Mr. Meagre found that Pumbeditha had been doing full justice to its ancient fame as a city of wonders. Some report of his visit to Mr. Mongrel had gone abroad and been greatly exaggerated. Rumor had it that the young parson was first directed to the hovel by special revelation — a guiding star, or a

fiery cross blazing in the sky. It was said that at his first approach the old man had lodged the contents of a large ducking-gun right in the little preacher's brain, and that the young servant of the Church had been preserved by a miracle. It was further said that old Mr. Mongrel had pursued Mr. Meagre over a thirty-acre field with a scythe, frequently passing it through his body in a vain attempt to kill him; and that after a mortal conflict, lasting from sundown until midnight, the young clergyman had worked a charm upon his adversary. He "had powwowed the fits out of the old feller, and then held him still like a snake holds a bird." Of course the old man finally begged off, for fear of being irresistibly drawn down the clerical throat. Old Mr. Ludwig, the man who kept the inverted horseshoe over his door, said the witches had got hold of Mongrel, and Meagre had "lay'd 'em;" and that any preacher that could drive the witches out of a man could put them into one. "I not want dat Meagre to kom near my blace," he said. "He fools Krime, und he fools Mongrel, but I keeps de crick 'tween me und him."

Indeed the young parson had rendered himself notorious. He was looked upon as one who wore a charmed life, impervious to lead and steel, and who might do any amount of mischief to crops and cattle, and yet escape undetected and unharmed. Rogero's winged horse, Orlando's enchanted sword, and the invisible mantle of Jack the Giant Killer, were certainly at his command. He need not, therefore, be afraid

of the Evil One, and was perhaps himself an imp of Beelzebub, doing wonders in the name of his prince.

This, however, was only believed by a certain class of the people. Another class, not less fond of gossip, but whose credulity took a more modern form, repeated other strange stories of what had been said and done on that eventful night and the few days that followed, none of which were true excepting one. Before going to Gainfield Mr. Meagre had really expressed a hope that Mr. Mongrel might yet be baptized and partake of the holy Eucharist. The old man's bar-room companions and the outlawed young men of the neighborhood thought this a rich joke; and these, with a few professing Christians of liberal views and exalted piety, who feared that their holiness would be outraged by association with publicans and sinners, joined in sheerest derision and scorn, and with one voice gave the poor old man the opprobrious name of "Meagre's disciple."

It was some time before the young parson knew of the ridiculous notoriety his visit to poor old Mr. Mongrel had gained for him. While at Gainfield he had heard nothing of it, and although Mrs. Middleton, in a letter to him, made some reference to a scene or two in Macbeth, he thought she meant to remind him of some of his pranks and recitations when alone with the family during the long evenings of the previous winter. Nor did any of the members of Mr. Middleton's family say anything to the young pastor about this matter when he next came to Pumbeditha.

They made it a point never to communicate to him the gossip they happened to hear, because they thought it might be unpleasant and unprofitable to him. In this instance they had an especial reason for keeping quiet : there was a singular imputation of good influences to evil agencies, which was repulsive to them. Mrs. Middleton therefore regretted that she had even hinted at the subject in her note, and was satisfied that Mr. Meagre did not allude to it. This was all right.

Of course rumor got the start of the young parson, and he found out what ideas the people had of him and his work, as preachers find out a great many things, by having them suddenly and obnoxiously thrust upon his notice.

The first intimation Rev. Petit had that he was supposed to be in league with the prince of the power of the air, was a sort of Paddy's hint. Young Caspar Ludwig, who attended his father's mill, and lived with his little family in the basement story of the mill, had a sick child. As Mabel, Caspar's wife, belonged to the church, although she had not attended service for a long time, the young parson thought it his duty to make some inquiries about her and her little one.

He accordingly went, and after some difficulty succeeded in finding the place. He saw no person about the premises as he approached, and yet the creaking of an ungreased gudgeon and the clatter of the hopper told him that the mill was going, and he therefore concluded that Caspar or some of his family was at home. If, however, there were no

human beings in sight, there were still specimens enough of other departments of animated nature to illustrate two or three pictorial histories, if only a special artist had been on the spot. A number of swine wandered about, with their tails curled and their noses on the ground, in search of stray grains of wheat, while others were lying around as if too well fed or too lazy to enter into competition with their more enterprising fellows. The inactivity of these last was made up, however, by the friskiness of a litter of young pigs, two of which were contending fiercely for a straw. Two turkey gobblers were strutting around and showing their gallantry by spreading out their tails, inflating their red throats until they turned blue, and making with spasmodic vehemence the sound which gives them their rural name. A file of puddle ducks, led by a Muscovy captain, quacked and waddled laboriously, but energetically, as if marching directly to the dam in delightful anticipation of some such cooling process as Tom Hickman recommended to the lovesick elder. Meanwhile a flock of alarmed geese flapped their wings and cackled in apparent effort to arouse the people and save the city, and one impudent old gander stretched his long neck and hissed derisively and ominously at the parson. To many of their manifestations Rev. Petit had long been accustomed. His corpulent sexton always gobbled, some of his male members were given to quacking, and nearly all the female portion of his people cackled incessantly.

But as this was the first time the young man had been *hissed* since his entrance into public life, he felt badly enough about it, especially as this demonstration of disgust attracted to him the attention of a pair of puppies that were practising Olympic games with all nature for an amphitheatre and a blinkard rooster for a spectator. The wrestling instantly ceased. The victor in the last contest stood still and looked innocently at the new-comer, as if inquiring whether he were friend or foe; while his disgraced competitor jumped up, barked once, and ran around an old wheel-house into the bushes. The rooster marched off to hunt up the scattered members of his domestic establishment, and the Rev. Petit rode up closer to the mill. As, however, the presence of the young dogs was highly suggestive of the fact that the mother might not be far off, he concluded not to dismount until some one came to assure him that he would not be torn in pieces. A breastwork of feather-beds had saved him once, in which case the material employed was, at least, as appropriate as that behind which General Jackson was long supposed to have been intrenched at the battle of New Orleans, and now the horse's back might prove to be the roof from which the kid could laugh at the wolf.

While carrying out this prudential course, an overgrown boy rode up to the mill on an old grey mare, caparisoned with a blind bridle (one rein of which was a piece of rope) and an empty bag. The boy wore a pair of short, tight blue pants, one boot and one shoe,

a rimless straw hat, and a long linsey overcoat with capes, which seemed from its style and condition to have belonged to his great-grandfather.

From this boy Rev. Petit tried to get some information in regard to the folks who lived in the mill, but he was answered in monosyllables which Noah Webster himself could not have spelled, and which no historian could be expected to write down in the hope of representing the sounds uttered, or expressing the intelligence designed to be conveyed. Nor did the youngster spend much time with his reverend questioner. He simply sprawled on old Whitey's neck, as if giving her an affectionate embrace, and "slid off" on one side of the beast; then picked up the bag that had "slid off" with him, and went into the mill.

"If that boy ever turns out to be an Ashland sage," thought Mr. Meagre, "I'll turn biographer and share his immortality. I find that my only chance for fame is to hitch myself to some one else, at any rate. Have a notion to play Boswell to that insulting old gander and the brute creation generally by which I am surrounded. But what's the use to sit here when that maternal canine, like another Dacian mother, may be mourning her broken family, miles away."

Rev. Petit, half ashamed of his delay, dismounted instantly, and went to the door of what he took to be the dwelling part of the mill. He could hardly have failed to know which door that was, either, for a dish-rag, a frying-pan, and nine herrings strung through the eye on a ramrod, garnished the wall just outside

of it. "Rather a small family this must be," soliloquized he, as he stood waiting for an answer to his loud knock. He judged of this by the fact that only three of the fish had been taken from the stick, leaving their heads to show that the full complement of a dozen had originally been bought and hung up for use.

The door at which Mr. Meagre was knocking was a double one, not like your double doors in town, divided up and down, but sawed through horizontally in the middle, so that the top part could be opened and the lower part left closed. And in this instance the top part was opened at last, although the lower part was left closed for some time afterwards. The young parson of course expected to be admitted without a challenge, but Mabel, it appears, was meditating upon the line of policy that he himself had adopted before getting off the horse. She too thought discretion was the better part of valor, and determined to see how far Rev. Petit's admittance would comport with her own safety. She planted herself between the parson and her child with that maternal instinct which leads a she-bear to get between an enemy and her cubs. As she backed from the door, and sought to hide the whole cradle by spreading the skirts of her dress with her hands, the abashed clergyman feared that he had interrupted her while she was dressing the little thing, and he was about to withdraw. But Mabel, looking pale, although courageous, cried out to him, "Can you eat fire?"

“*Me?*” asked Mr. Meagre, in utter amazement. “Can I eat fire? Certainly not. But why do you ask that question?”

“O bekase,” answered the woman; and having given this satisfactory reason, she asked, after a moment’s pause, “Can you make it snow in summer?”

“Certainly not. Why do you ask such questions?”

“O bekase,” she again replied.

“Because of what?” asked the astonished little preacher. “Who says that I, or any one else, can do such things?”

“Why his father—that’s the old man—says some people can, at leastways they can make the hail come and cut the corn and cabbage, and pelt the cows and things till they die. We often pen our live stock up.”

“Nonsense, Mrs. Ludwig,” said Rev. Petit, indignantly; and then half amused, he asked, “And if even this power were given to men, why do you suspect that I have it and would use it?”

“Why you sec,” replied Mabel, “Old Minkey Mongrel was here yisterday after that grist of corn the doctor said we should allow her, and she said as how you did some curus things to the old man, and she knows all about witches, though she aint none herself.”

It now flashed upon the young parson’s mind that these poor people thought he had something to do with witchcraft. Old Minkey had given out the idea, not maliciously perhaps, but because she did not know any better; and this family, fully settled in the general belief of such things, and ever on the alert to descry

some evil of the kind, eagerly laid hold of her suggestion and fed their morbid fancies with it.

For all of this Rev. Petit did not care a fig, except that he feared it might prevent him from doing these poor deluded people the good he desired to do them. Their opinion of him might so prejudice them against him as to destroy his influence with them as a Christian minister, and he was anxious on that account to disabuse their minds, and yet he knew how hard it would be to do this. These general notions had grown with their growth and strengthened with their strength, and could not be done away with in a moment. This would require the work of years. The young parson therefore concluded to enter into no labored argument on the subject at that time, and contented himself with simply denying the charges brought against him. To this the woman replied that witches always denied that they were witches, and persisted in this, apparently all unconscious that she was impugning her pastor's veracity. She tried to satisfy her mind by putting questions that bore upon her ideas of the law that governed witchcraft. "Did you come across the bridge?" she asked.

Here the youthful parson might have been tempted, as usual, to answer in the negative, and thus excite or rather confirm suspicions, and then play all kinds of pranks with the woman's credulity; but he remembered that this would be sinful and cruel, for the poor creature was frightened almost to death already. He therefore obeyed what he hoped was the law of his

nature, and told the truth. "Yes, madam," he said, "I came over the bridge and crossed the stream several times in coming from Pumbeditha out here."

"Then it can't be true; bekase witches can't come further nor the middle of the creek, and besides, his father—that's the old man—went up to the stone bridge and marked a cross on it, right in the middle on the ground, and that allers scares witches back, you know."

Mrs. Ludwig's fears being now somewhat allayed, she allowed the little preacher to come into the room. He found upon inquiry that the little child was getting well. "It only had the op-nemma, that's the 'go backs,' " said Mabel, "but his father—that's the old man—pow-wowed it, and the doctor gave it some stuff, and now it's picking up agin."

Mr. Meagre muttered something that might have been construed into an intimation that he had more faith in the doctor's stuff than in the old man's pow-wowing, and soon left the house, or rather the mill, much to the relief of the poor mother. As he rode away she called out to him, "Don't tell his father—that's the old man—you was here and I let you in. He said we shouldn't do it, or you would work a spell on us."

The young parson rode back to the village, musing strangely: he fell into a sort of reverie, which was not broken until he found that the horse had brought him to Mr. Middleton's door and there stopped. That evening he seemed to be very much taken up with his

own thoughts. "What is the matter that you are so depressed?" asked Mrs. Middleton.

"Why," replied he, "strange doubts have often been raised by people in regard to my age and calling; they have often asked me if I was really a preacher, but never before to-day have I been directly accused of being a salamander and a wizard."

Mr. Middleton then told his pastor of many other things that had been said of him, some of which amused and pained him. Old Mr. Gottlieb the tavern-keeper and his family were in great distress, as they feared the witches would again infest their house, in which event their business would be ruined. They did many things to avert such a calamity, although half fearful that their efforts would prove unavailing.

It is said that the Abyssinians worshipped the Devil. Their plea was that the Good Being was *too* good to do them any harm, and that it was well enough for them to do all in their power to propitiate the wrath of the Evil One. From some such motive it was feared Mr. Gottlieb tried to keep in with the young parson. Had the young servant of the Church made any request of the old man, he would perhaps have granted it with all the grace of a lonely traveller who yields his money to a highway robber for fear of losing his life. This was all sad enough to Mr. Meagre, although he knew that these superstitious ideas were confined to a very few persons, and were too palpable to do any extended mischief. As far as old Mr. Mongrel was concerned, the young parson

knew that he had far more to fear from the jibes and jeers of the poor man's former companions, but most of all from the almost demoniacal spirit that some professing Christians showed towards one who was an outcast from society, and therefore adjudged to be an outcast from God.

CHAPTER XIX.

PHARISAISM.

"BROTHER MIDDLETON," said Mr. Meagre, as he walked up and down the floor rapidly, "I do not know what these people think, but it is the plain teaching of the Bible, and it is my only hope as an individual, that the grace of God abounds for the chief of sinners. I cannot, without either convicting myself of a self-righteousness that God will not approve, or limiting a grace that He has not limited, and thus cutting myself off from the hope of salvation, say that there is not as much mercy for that unfortunate man as there is for me. It seems to me that he has been spared just in order that I may do my duty to him; and the events of this day, as well as all that people say, only tend to fasten the conviction upon my mind."

"These people mean to reflect upon *you* when they call him your disciple," said Mr. Middleton.

"They think," said Mr. Meagre, "to insult me by associating him with me in the bonds of Christian brotherhood, but I will gladly accept the fellowship. We are both poor wretches, prisoners of hope, to be saved by the unmerited favor of God in Christ Jesus. If they are more, let them thank their God that they are not like this publican. 'This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them,' was what was said in derision of my Master. The servant is not greater than his Lord. I will labor for that man, and if there is any reproach attaching to the duty I am willing to bear it."

"I have lived here a long time, Mr. Meagre," said Mr. Middleton, "long enough to know the history of the place and of the people, and every one of those who speak so scornfully of Mongrel has some stain, not only upon his family escutcheon, but upon his personal character, which time has scarcely hidden from the eyes of men."

"I should have suspected as much," said the young parson. "It is always those least free from sins who are apt to charge sins to the account of others. I rejoice not only that my Saviour took upon Him my nature, and can sympathize with my infirmities, but also that in all His life He was sinless. I want to be judged by perfection. But even supposing that what you say of these people were not true, why talk about comparative guilt, when we all have enough to sink us to perdition, and when the least that the best of us deserves is banishment into outer darkness? Why,

when we must all cry for mercy, should any one attempt to slay this poor wretch when grasping the horns of the altar?"

"Do your best for him," said Mr. Middleton, who had now become as much excited as his pastor. "Use the means God has given you, and remember that His power is as illimitable as His love."

"And that power is promised to me," said the young pastor.

"Yes, you go not in your own strength. His blessing is pledged to you."

"I will go to see Mongrel again to-morrow morning," said Mr. Meagre.

"I will stop a team—suspend all of my farming operations to furnish you a horse. I will go with you," remarked Mr. Middleton.

The next morning Mr. Meagre, accompanied by his elder, visited the poor man's cabin, and spent part of the forenoon with him. They found him sitting up, but poorly enough. He was very petulant, but they treated him kindly, and were not discouraged.

That evening the young parson spent in his own room. The next day was Sunday, and he preached a sermon—not a written one, but nevertheless prayed over and carefully thought out—on the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican.

Now the town of Pumbeditha was ornamented by the citizenship of an ex-deputy constable, who rejoiced in the euphonious cognomen of William Pert Bottles. This man had belonged to a variety of denominations,

and last of all to the Baptists. He had contrived to hide his real character through these changes, but had at last been found out, and had been expelled from this last body for heresy and drunkenness. He was now going about to establish a denomination of his own, the main tenets of which were to be, "*firstly*," that baptism by immersion was essential to salvation; and "*secondly*," that all men would be saved eventually whether baptized or not. In short, the doctrines of this new organization were to be a cross between those held by the "orthodox" Baptists and those held by the Universalists. Of the first of these fundamental truths Mr. Bottles was assured simply because he himself had been baptized by immersion; and of the second he felt no doubt, since man's sufferings in this world are a full atonement for his guilt, as his own persecution at the hands of old Mr. Waters, the orthodox Baptist, fully demonstrated. Thus far the new sect was not very strong numerically, but was a *unit*, and expected to have large accessions. In fact, Mr. Bottles was himself the church, and carried a Testament in his pocket, from which he expected to prove to the world that he was right, and that all Christendom, and especially the orthodox Baptist portion of it, was wrong.

To convince an unbelieving community that "Elder Waters was a villain," Brother William Pert had served a false writ upon him, for which misdemeanor Mr. Bottles was deprived of his saddle-bags and big pocket-book, the well-known badges of his office. After Wil-

liam Pert was thus relieved of the cares of State, he assiduously devoted all of his time to scandal; but as he had not yet succeeded in demolishing Elder Fuller Hall Waters, he had not hitherto disturbed Rev. Petit Meagre. But on the Sunday just spoken of, the young parson must have been guilty of some offence against Brother Bottles's theological opinions, as the aforesaid modern reformer, thereafter, quoted largely from the Epistle to the Romans to prove that Meagre said a man ought to sin that grace might abound. With the exception of Mr. Bottles the people thought the sermon well timed, and although there was of course no direct reference to the disposition that had been manifested towards Mr. Mongrel, quite a number of the folks showed a different feeling towards him afterwards. Still a few thought that he ought not to go to the same heaven with *them*, and these continued to laugh at Mr. Meagre's efforts to do the man good.

On Monday morning the young parson went to see the old man again, and was more encouraged than ever to repeat his visits. He found him in great concern for his eternal interests, and was astonished to learn how much he remembered, not only of the last conversation he had had with him, but also of the one held on the night of the first visit to him. When Mr. Meagre was about leaving the cabin, Mr. Mongrel said: "Well, Parson Meagre, if you really think that's true what you say, that there is mercy for *me*, I wish you'd pray for me till we meet next time, and come to see me and tell me more about the Saviour. I want

to hear more of these things, for I don't know much, and would like to die 'accepted in the beloved,' as you call it. I do wish I could be baptized and take communion."

"You may be sure," said the young parson, "that I will do all I can for you, and I hope that all your wishes will be gratified."

From that time, Mr. Meagre of course regarded Mr. Mongrel as his catechumen. He tried to instruct him with a view to his baptism into the Church, in full hope that God would manifest Himself to him in His word and sacraments, as He does not manifest Himself unto the world.

CHAPTER XX.

MONGREL ON TRIAL.

It has been truly said that the principle of temperance does not consist in the scanty supply, but in the strong self-restraint—that man is not to be perfected by being *kept out of* temptation, but by being victorious *in it*; and yet the fact that Mr. Mongrel was unable to get out to taverns and other places where he would have been liable to temptation, was a great advantage to him. He had his depraved appetite to contend with, to be sure, when at home, but he

was kept from gratifying it, and time was thus given him to think, to set his heart against the evil, and to gain strength from on high to overcome in the dreadful struggle. In watching the case, the young parson was glad to learn that the old man ceased to murmur that he was compelled to keep in the house, and began to be thankful that he could not get out and increase his liability to his besetting sin.

It was not long, however, before Mr. Mongrel began to think that the evil to which he was exposed was no more to be feared — that he could stand alone. This is no uncommon thing in man's religious life, and the young parson trembled at it, and tried to warn his catechumen against it. Sinful self is said to be our greatest enemy, but righteous self is to be dreaded quite as much. Indeed, when man thinks he has overcome his evil nature, it has often only assumed a different phase, even as Satan often covers his deformity with the garments of an angel of light. It was hard, however, to make the old man sensible of this. In a little while he became as self-reliant as Peter, and even wished to court temptation, in order to show how easily he could overcome it.

On one of those bright, genial, summer-like days that often come in the month of February, and betray inexperienced people into the idea that winter is over and that they ought to make garden, Mr. Meagre was standing at the window in the end of Mr. Middleton's house. He looked up street, and recognized the tottering form of Mr. Mongrel — now on his first visit to

the village since prostrated by his last illness. When he came in front of the tavern he stopped, turned around once or twice like one in indecision, and then went into the bar-room.

Without waiting to get his hat, coat, or boots, the parson ran towards the tavern, followed the old man into the door, and got by his side just in time to grasp a glass of rum that Mr. Gottlieb had poured out for his former customer. Mr. Mongrel, taken aback, struggled for the liquor until he recognized the parson, when he yielded it, although not without a murmur. His giant passion, which had, perhaps, only been slumbering, seemed to be fully aroused, and it required a great effort to overcome it. Perhaps the old man would have had even more difficulty in resisting the temptation, had he not been surprised and dreadfully frightened. The appearance of his spiritual adviser then and there was altogether unexpected to him, and the strange garb in which the young pastor was attired, perhaps, added to the poor man's confusion. At any rate this queer dress — a red velvet smoking-cap, with a heavy tassel to it, a flashy silk morning-gown and embroidered slippers, trappings such as Rev. Petit had never been seen in before by Mr. Gottlieb — had a wonderful effect upon that superstitious old gentleman's imagination. The young parson's advent had been so sudden, so like an apparition, that the grey-headed innkeeper supposed he had come in through the keyhole, and now that he stood

before him, clothed in this fantastic attire, Mr. Gottleib took him for a conjurer, and expected to see

“Black spirits and white,
Red spirits and grey,”

come up out of the floor, as if by the wand of an enchanter. Dominie Sampson could not have been more terrified when Meg Merrilies caught and throttled him at the Cairn of Derneleugh, than was the credulous old vender of liquid fire at that moment. All of his ideas of what Rev. Petit *was*, were now verified — all of his fears as to what Rev. Petit *would do*, were about to be realized. And he expressed himself very much as the good Mr. Sampson did on the occasion just referred to; that is, he was disposed to mutter curses and imprecations, and then explain them away apologetically, only with this difference, that while the Dominie first used Latin to denounce Meg, and then English to appease her, Mr. Gottleib tangled up adulterated German and English, already very much mixed on his tongue, in such a way as to make confusion worse confounded. Fear and respect, respect growing out of fear, sat visibly enthroned upon the old man's face, as with uplifted hands he besought “Herr Mongrel” not to resist “*de goot porror*.” The whole scene would have been a good study for Hogarth.

With this combination of circumstances in his favor, Rev. Petit had comparatively little difficulty in leading Mr. Mongrel out of the house. He took him to

Mr. Middleton's, where the good lady gave him a cup of coffee and some warm food, and sent him home that evening in the Diligence. The next day he was very grateful to the young parson for what he had done, and never attempted to play Peter again, for fear the old Simon would prevail.

This occurrence, of course, gained some notoriety in the community. It would, perhaps, never have been heard of had it not been for Mr. Gottlieb and his family. His wife and sister-in-law, who not only wore eel-skins to keep off "rumatiz," but some strangely shaped bits of wood as amulets to keep off thunder, and which they used in pow-wowing—in fact, who were given to some kind of fetichism—were peeping through the crack of a board partition, when Rev. Petit sprang into the bar-room. These ladies ran into the back yard, and gave the alarm to two men who were sawing a cord of wood for a pint of six-cent whisky, and these gentlemen, perhaps fearful that the contents of Mr. Gottlieb's bottles would be spirited away before they got their pay, ran around in front of the house just in time to see the young parson leading his submissive parishioner away; and it did not require any more persons than the Gottlieb family and these two assistants, to give the gossip-loving community strange accounts of the whole transaction.

Then you should have heard the talk: venerable toppers expressed the opinion that Meagre was for taking away men's liberties. He made Cain Mongrel

follow him like a dog, and Mongrel was to be pitied. Yea, there was some talk of rescuing him from martyrdom, as gallant knights in the olden time had rescued fair ladies from baronial castles, and then poor down-trodden priest-ridden humanity might get as drunk as it pleased.

A part of the religious community thought it a sin to force a man into the kingdom of Heaven against his will, and of this sin Meagre was guilty. They knew there was nothing genuine about Mongrel's reform, for he had always been a disgrace to the community. All of this talk, however, did not abate the young parson's zeal. What he cared for most, was the fact that these people saw the point upon which Mr. Mongrel was most liable to temptation, and, God forgive them! they tried to make use of it for his destruction. When they saw that he was able at last to pass the tavern, they tried to spring mines under him, that he might be overtaken in a fault. Once when "Old Cain," as they called him, was expected to pass by a certain point in the road, some young men came out from behind a hay-stack, and shook a flask of whisky under his nose, and then tried to induce him to drink, even threatening to pour it down his throat. No one, perhaps, knew the ordeal through which that aged novice had to pass, and yet he braved his tempters, and came out of the fire unscorched. He reported this act to Mr. Meagre, whose indignation led him to hunt up the offenders, and give them such a lecture as he had never given to any mortal man. The ex-

cuse offered for it was, that Bill Bottles, Tom Jefferson, Mrs. Pugnose, and Mrs. Spotters told them to do it *just for a joke*. These persons all prided themselves upon their piety, but their piety never manifested itself just in that particular way afterwards, as they were all a little afraid of raising a bee about their ears. They therefore contented themselves with sneering, and protesting that they were not afraid of Meagre, in such a way as to convince every one that they were afraid of him.

As for old Mr. Gottlieb, he was perfectly cured. A wag told him that, if ever he set out a bottle before Mongrel again, Meagre would come over, describe a circle on the bar-room floor with a piece of chalk, mark it off with the twelve signs of the Zodiac, then take down a billiard stick, strike three times on the boards, say some Latin, and bring up the Author of all Evil, hoofs, tail, horns, pitchfork and all—a declaration that said wag explained away to others by stating that it was only an impressive way of enlarging upon the saying, “He will raise old Nick.” And thereafter tremulous fear made Gottlieb exceedingly circumspect.

One day Mr. Mongrel came to the young parson in a very despondent mood. “You must not think hard of me,” he said, “bekase I trouble you so much. I have a good deal to contend agin, and no one cares for me but you.”

“I am always glad to see you,” said Mr. Meagre, “you cannot come too often. I feel a great interest in you. Let me tell you, too, that you are mistaken

in supposing that I am the only one that cares for you. There are many others who are watching you with solicitude. The only difficulty is that they do not show their anxiety to you, but even that fault will be mended, as you will find. I will see to that matter, for you need encouragement. As for the few who try to work against you, you must not mind them."

"Some of these fellers," said he, "begrudge human natur' a salvation that can reach a poor wretch like me, and take me up."

This expression was one of the most affecting Mr. Meagre had ever heard. Poor Mongrel's heart seemed ready to break when he uttered it. He sobbed like a child, and his whole frame was convulsed by the throes of an inward agony. The young parson laid his hand upon the old man's head, and as he smoothed his thin white hair spoke to him kindly. He reminded him of the parable of the one lost sheep, which had not been forgotten since their first interview. "Do not fear," he said, "God and the holy angels and all good men are for you, and you will conquer and more than conquer through Him that loved you and gave Himself for you."

They then kneeled down, and prayed long and earnestly together, and when they rose up a calm, sweet joy seemed to have fallen upon the poor man's heart, and hushed the storm that had raged there, as though the serene One had said, "Peace, be still."

"Mr. Meagre," said he, "you don't believe in bad spirits, do you?"

"Yes I do," said the parson. "If there are good angels, we may well believe that there are bad ones."

"Then you believe in witches, do you?"

"I do not know exactly about that," was the reply. "There are a great many things that some people about here and elsewhere profess to have seen and heard, which may be only imaginary, but I often think that there are real evil agencies at the bottom of them. Strange things have occurred since sin came into the world. If brought about by a power greater than that given to man, they must be either from God or the Devil, and I very much fear that they are from the latter. All this only goes to show how men have allowed evil to prevail in their hearts. If the Holy Spirit dwelt in them, we would have nothing of this."

"The reason I asked you," said the old man, "was that I think if ever a man was possessed of the Devil, as you read in the good book, it was me. Some say it was bad lick, and the Devil might have been in the lick, but it was the Devil still. Reckon he thought, if he got you out of the way, he'd be certain of me, for he tempted me to kill you. I dreamed of it when I was asleep, and talked about it when I was awake, and that Mink and Madge can tell you."

"Mink told other people about it, Mr. Mongrel," said the parson, "and made them think that I had gotten the evil out of you by some black art. I can

now understand how the poor woman took up these strange ideas. But if the Evil One was in you, and is now cast out, you must give all the thanks to Him who came to destroy the works of the Devil. And remember that your only hope is in the fact, that the contest now is between God and Satan. It is God that worketh in you to will and to do of His good pleasure."

When Mr. Mongrel started home the young parson walked with him half of the way, and then stood on a hill-top, watching him and following him with a prayer, until with tottering step he entered his cabin. The pastor's visits to the old man were more frequent after this than they had ever been before. The attention of Christian people in the neighborhood was also directed to him, and poor Cain received many kind words of encouragement.

Some months had now passed since the first visit to the hovel, during which time the poor man had been instructed with a view to his baptism. In two weeks that sacrament was to be administered to him, and then he was to be admitted to full communion of the church. But just one week before the time when the Holy Eucharist was to be celebrated by the congregation, the poor man was taken suddenly ill, and it was thought that he could not survive. It was at least evident that he could not get to the church to be baptized and confirmed with the other catechumens. Under these circumstances, it was determined that he should have clinical baptism. At the ap-

pointed time Mr. Meagre and his elders assembled in the cabin. And there, on that bright spring morning, old Cain Mongrel professed aloud his faith, as expressed in the Apostles' Creed; after which he was baptized in the name of the Triune God, and then received the sacrament of the body and blood of our Saviour. That evening, just as the sun was setting, his spirit passed into the eternal world. Mr. Meagre and Mr. Middleton stayed with him until he died. His last words were, "*I believe; Lord, help thou mine unbelief.*"

After making some arrangements with the neighbors for the funeral, the pastor and his elders rode back home. Scarcely a word was spoken on the way, and yet they were not sad. Indeed, a calm joy was visible on their countenances. The young pastor felt that his labors in Pumbeditha had not been in vain, and that night at family worship there went up the song, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory."

The history of poor Mr. Mongrel had a wonderful effect upon the young parson's mind. He determined by the help of God to labor more than ever among the lowly, and learned never to falter in his work because of discouraging appearances, nor yet to attempt to estimate the results of the Spirit's influence in the case of particular persons by mere human probabilities. Around him were those whom he had expected would have made a public confession of Christ before this, and they lingered in the outer legal vesti-

bule, while this poor outcast from men, simply trusting in sovereign grace, had, as it was hoped, passed through the veil into the inner sanctuary of God. Often — often in after years, when his heart almost sank within him, did the words repeated in his ears by Mr. Middleton come to the young preacher's mind, and encourage him to put forth the renewed effort: "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand, for thou knowest not whether shall prosper either this or that, or whether both shall be alike good."

CHAPTER XXI.

"US MINISTERS"—THE MODERN MARTYR.

WHILE Mr. Bottles, "the universal salvationist," was spending his time and breath in laudable efforts to convince the public that Mr. Meagre did not preach sound doctrine when he said that grace abounded for the chief of sinners, another bright idea took possession of his brain. He declared that the young parson sinned by going near old Cain Mongrel, for the Bible said a mark had been put on him that all men might know and avoid him. The passage in proof was supposed by Mr. Bottles to be in the Revelation of St. John; but being challenged to quote it one night in a

drinking saloon, he failed to show anything there that had special reference to Cain. So the next day he inquired of a good old lady who read the Scriptures a great deal, “Where the Bible told about the first murderer?” and being properly informed, he thereafter explained part of the fourth chapter of Genesis as a prophecy having direct and undoubted reference to Mr. Mongrel. The fact that the mark put upon the Cain there mentioned was in order to his preservation — “lest any finding him should kill him” — Mr. Bottles explained as a “figger of speech. The Scriptures sometimes go by contraries, as every expositioner knows.”

The “horrible truth” about Mr. Cain, as Rev. William called it, failed, however, to attract any members to the “new ark of safety” that he had built. Indeed, this great theologian was told by several store-box sages who usually composed his audiences, that he was a “downright goose,” which compliment he took as a part of the persecution called forth by his eminent abilities.

A truly great man never stands too much on his dignity, and in this respect Mr. Bottles strove to show himself a truly great man. Mr. Meagre had never been introduced to him formally, and he had only that free-and-easy speaking acquaintance with him which any one attains to who frequents a village, and meets the principal citizens from time to time upon the streets. In short, the young parson simply knew Mr. Bottles by sight and reputation: he had been

pointed out to him as one of the Christian philanthropists who had conceived the laudable purpose of trying old Mr. Mongrel's powers of resistance by suddenly putting a bottle of whisky to his mouth. When Rev. Petit passed Rev. William on the streets, the last-named brother usually acted like a child "anxious to show himself." He either commenced to talk very loudly to some one, or to walk very rapidly, as if all creation were waiting upon him; and once or twice, when engaged in enlightening some toppers in front of a tavern, he assumed bodily attitudes which would have led a credulous man to suppose that he was about to solve and demonstrate the grand problem of human perfectibility. On these occasions the young parson usually acknowledged his recognition with a bow and sometimes with a smile.

It was not long, however, before Mr. Bottles called on Mr. Meagre. He blustered into Mr. Middleton's room one day after dinner, while the young parson was quietly enjoying his cigar.

"Rev. Mr. Meagre, I presume?" he said.

"Yes, sir," said the youthful preacher.

"I am Rev. William P. Bottles," said the visitor, "and I have just came to see you once. Didn't know ef it was my place or your'n to come fust; but I ain't formal myself, and considered as how I would break through the meshes by which society is interlaced. I don't think *us ministers* oughter stand on dignity."

"Take a seat, sir," said the young parson, rising courteously. "Have a cigar?"

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Bottles, taking one that was offered to him and biting off the end of it, "it is 'stonishin' how *us ministers* is given to smokin', but still it's a pleasant way to waste away one's time when we is studyin' deep questions of human religion, or holding interlucatory conversation as perfessional brethring."

"It is a bad practice," said Rev. Petit dryly.

At this point Mr. Middleton entered. "How are you, Bill?" asked he, half astonished and half amused at Mr. Bottles's presence and complacency.

Mr. Bottles looked "taken down" when Mr. Middleton called him "Bill" before the strange professional brother, but covered up the indignity in the best way he could. "How are you, Brother Middleton?" said he. "I just called on Mr. Meagre for the fust time. Was just sayin' *us ministers* ought to observe the law of sociabilitilness. It sets a good example to *our flocks*."

"Have you a large flock, Bill?" asked Mr. Middleton, looking out of the window, and picking his teeth with a quill.

"Not very, Brother Middleton," said Mr. Bottles. "Only me and my wife as yit. She jined the last camp-meetin' I had, or rather last *bush-meetin'*. We had no tents, only one to supply the multitude with loaves and fishes, like we're commanded to do in the good book. We'd had much larger additions, but it set in to rain the fust day, and the boys upset the table of the money-changers like the Pharisees of old,

and my wife — that's Mrs. Bottles, Mr. Meagre — got excited, and we had to break up. We 'spec' to have another meetin' soon, when Mr. and Mrs. Huber 'ill jine, if we can form a partnership by 'sociatin' a little bisness with our labor of love in doin' good for souls."

Mr. Middleton left the room about this time, and the young parson suspected that he went out to laugh.

"Did you ever notice," resumed Mr. Bottles, when they were left alone, "that *us ministers* have a great deal to contend agin?"

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Meagre.

"You noticed just now how as Mr. Middleton called me 'Bill.' It seemed like as if he had no respect for the perfession, but then he's 'scusable. I used to work for him, and he kind of know'd me; that is, I used to practise in his family long ago when I follered docterin', and then they allers called me Bill."

"Were you a physician once?" inquired Rev. Petit.

"Yes; I paid speshul 'tention to hosses, and Mr. Middleton 'ployed me two days on the 'cashun of rubbin' that fine sorrel pony that got sick after Rev. Brother Gallopaway borrowed him. I give him some stuff that Dr. Arlington mixed up in a black bottle for him. Me and Dr. Arlington was partners in that case. He perscribed and I 'ministered the dose, and Mr. Middleton give me two dollars and a half when the pony got well. Dr. Arlington laughed when he

axed him how much *he* charged, and said he would put it in the bill when he charged fur the rest of the family docterin'. You see, Mrs. Middleton was very low that summer, and the old doctor tuck great interest in her and cured her. And as I was sayin', that's the way me and Brother Middleton got so intimate. I don't mind him, and often call him Melville behind his back. That's his fust name, you know."

"Yes, sir, I know that is his first name."

"What bothers me most, Brother Meagre, is the way the boys act at our meetins. They aint got no respect for the cloth. They even throw'd corks and whole ginger-cakes at me when I was speakin', and said me and my wife was the biggest bottles they ever saw. You see they was making fun of our names. Onst I was just sayin' I had an important pint in view, and one of the ignoramuses asked what kind of a pint it was? and when I said it was a wheel within a wheel, one of them pulled a flask out of my pocket that had a little lickier in it for medicine purposes, and they said it was a pint bottle found on a bottle. There is no tellin' how much good was perverted at that meetin'."

"I suppose not," quoth Rev. Petit.

"No, indeed," quoth Mr. Bottles. "Why, Brother Meagre, there was a feller named Tom Hickman down here from Gainfield that day, that was 'most converted. Fact is, he told me so. When the row commenced he axed to hear that argement agin; and when I had finished the retrospectin' view of the ser-

mon of the 'casion, he slapped me on the shoulder commendatively, and said it was a powerful effort, and while we was conversin', that Ike Whinny that was with him knocked off my hat — you know I preached with it on — and out came a deck of cards that I took from a parcel of fellers, and then they was a big time. And, indeed, it *was* funny that them two things — a bottle and a pack of cards — should be found on a preacher. Some of the boys pertended to believe I had used them, but Mr. Hickman said it was a shame to disturb a meetin' that way, and slander a pious man. Howsomever, he said it did him good for him to be there, and he was comin' next time we had big meetin' to give in his 'sperience, and you know you said in your most excellent sermon last time you was here, no, it was when the sainted Mr. Mongrel died, that one soul was worth a rite good deal. But don't you think all of *us ministers* ought to jine in and put the boys down? *I* think we ought to have a world's convention of the perfession to bear testimony."

"I am sorry," said the young parson, "that the boys have behaved badly, but they have never disturbed me. Once or twice some of them have whispered during service, but as a general thing they are respectful and apparently attentive when they come to our church. And I think this is the case, too, in all of the regular churches. I am inclined to believe that your bush-meetings only invite the boys to rowdyism."

"Well, Mr. Meagre, I reckon the difference be-

tween me and all the *other* ministers is, that when I was in the legal profession, I put the screws to the boys too hard."

"Then you were a lawyer too, were you?"

"Yes; but I give it up after me and old Waters had that fuss. I was disgusted, and so I thought I'd seek a sanctuary in the ark of the ministry. And, indeed, the charm was a great gratification to me. My better half said she noticed the difference in me directly I put on a white cravat. I believe in white cravats, even if old Waters does disgrace his'n. *Us ministers* ought to have some badge of distinction. But the profession has its trials and mighty conflicts. Me and you knows about that by our own experience, Mr. Meagre; but still I hope this great public controversy between me and you will be carried on in the right spirit."

"What controversy?" asked Rev. Petit in surprise.

"Why, bless your soul, Brother Meagre," exclaimed Mr. Bottles, "this community has been shook to its very centre about the different sentiments me and you holds on certain pints, and the people's a takin' sides all over the country."

"Mr. Bottles," said the young parson, coolly, "that is all nonsense. I never had and never can have any controversy with *you*. And I do not think the community is as much disturbed by some things as you suppose."

"I am glad," replied Mr. Bottles, "to hear you utter such observations. I am ready to compromise

the truth with anybody 'cept the Catholics, and old Waters, of course. I'll remember him, and hate him in the other world."

"I don't think," said Rev. Petit, "that the truth would suffer much if you would compromise or even sacrifice what I understand to be your theories."

"'Zactly so, Brother Meagre," said Mr. Bottles. "You always did state the truth translucently. Now, since we agree so well, oughtn't we as brethring to go on one another's pulpits, and even change pulpits at times? My flock would be glad to hear you."

"*Have* you a pulpit?" asked Mr. Meagre.

"Not yit," answered Mr. Bottles, "but I 'spect to git one."

"Well," said the young parson, "even when you do get one, I would advise you not to depend on me for exchanges. You know I have peculiar notions on that subject."

"Yes, I know that, Brother Meagre. I couldn't 'spect you to do it, for I know you wouldn't do it with the New Methodists when they had a fuss with the reg'lar preacher, and broke off from the old Conference. But I must go. Good evening, Mr. Meagre. I 'spect I can send you an app'ntment to give out, can't I?"

"O yes, Mr. Bottles, *you can send* one, but"——

"Very well, Mr. Meagre. Good-bye."

"I can call spirits from the vasty deep,"
said Mr. Middleton, from the adjoining room.

"Why, so can I; or so can any man;
But will they come when you do call for them?"

said the young parson.

"Mr. Bottles can *send* his appointment," said the good brother, "but will you *read* it? That's the question."

"Not much of a question either," said the young clergyman.

The next Sunday morning Mr. Bottles did send, with the request that it should be read from the pulpit, the following

NOATIS:

reverend William pert bottles late of the medikill and legull perfeshuns orther uv the pure scripture santes and universal salvashun seckt Wil hole fourth at hubers blac Smith Schop nere arlingtons Wudes this aftarnune at 3 clock in the aftarnune Wen the evils of the relijus woarld Wil b korreected opperchunite Wil be given to Jine the meetin after meetin is over. this congergashun is invited too tend. frunt ceats reservd fur the ladis. ole waters argemints agin me Wil be tuk notis of cum won, cum Al this roc shall fli frum it firm bacis sune as I william pert bottles a kollection will be tuk up on the casion fur the spences of the casion my Wif and missus huber will have kaiks and bear and lemen aid an grown nuts fur sail no other huxters loud on the grounds note bene them fellers that noes the ministers hat of and puls his cote Tale, and thros korks and ginger kaiks at him will be sude cording to la a convert from gainfeeld will give in his sperience on the solem casion.

Of course the young parson did not read this notice. He put it in his pocket, to be used as a sauce to some literary hodge-podge that he had promised himself on Monday. It appears that Mr. Bottles had written to Tom Hickman that he was to have meeting that day, and Tom came to Pumbeditha, but instead of going to Huber's blacksmith shop, he attended the five o'clock service in Mr. Meagre's church. Rev. Petit saw him come in and take a back seat, and was glad enough of it. Mr. Bottles, however, went to his appointment with his wife and Mr. and Mrs. Huber, in a one horse white-covered wagon, expecting to see a large crowd; but those who went with him, and an old negro who acted as sexton, were the only persons there. This was a disappointment, as a large and handsome assortment of cakes and beer had been prepared, and the proprietors of the establishment expected to do a sharp business, even if the evils of the religious world were not corrected.

The Pure Scripture Saints and Universal Salvation Sect waited patiently for the people to come, until half-past four o'clock, when the society got into a towering passion. The reverend author of this new church was guilty of using language that would have been considered profane in the mouth of a layman; and leaving the wagon in the care of his friends, he walked to town in advance to inquire into the cause of this neglect. The mystery was solved when he found out that his professional brother had not given

out his notice — a piece of meanness that was to be attributed to jealousy. And when he saw the young parson come out of church and speak to Tom Hickman, he knew that there had been a wicked attempt to proselyte his members. But Mr. Meagre was not deterred from taking Mr. Hickman by the hand, and expressing his delight at seeing him in church.

“You may thank Mike Stoner for it,” said Tom. “I was comin’ down here just to cut up at a bush-meetin’, but Mike give me fits just as I was leavin’ Gainfield, and said I ought to tend your meetin’ if I come to Pumbeditha. I tuck his advice, and I am not sorry for it. I hated to begin tendin’ meetin’ at home, and thought I might get a little used to it here. It don’t go so bad neither, and I think I will tend regular at home now.”

“Do, Tom,” said the young parson, “and may God bless you. If I can do anything for you, it will afford me pleasure.”

Mr. William Pert Bottles tried hard to get an interview with his “old and valuable friend, Mr. Hickman,” but failed. For this, of course, Rev. Petit Meagre was to blame, and Brother Bottles vowed vengeance: “I can steal sheep too, and Meagre won’t have many in his flock the next time he comes to Pumbeditha,” he said; but before the young parson’s next visit to his people in that place, his Brother Bottles had stolen a pig, perhaps as a sort of fantasia voluntary to get himself in tune for the work of

stealing sheep, to which, as a true founder of a sect, he found himself sacredly called; or, perhaps, under the promptings of a too ardent Donatistic impulse, at once to separate the herd from the flock. The result of this movement was that he found it necessary to leave the neighborhood between two days. He and his amiable spouse and co-worker departed one night in the white-covered wagon, and both turned up in an Ohio jail a year afterwards, for no greater offence, however, than trying to "scratch out each other's eyes out," probably in the attempt of the pastor to administer the discipline of his new church without the consent of the congregation, to wit, of Mrs. Bottles. For this incarceration Mr. Bottles did not care, as it saved him the trouble of providing for himself. But he was awfully provoked when the Baptist association met at Queenopolis, and Mr. Waters being in attendance, was invited with that body to visit the prison, and found him there. The caged brother, who had vowed that he would remember Mr. Waters in the next world, seemed desirous to forget him in this one; he tried to extemporize an "alias," but failed, and had to content himself with shaking his fist through the bars at his former brother and pastor.

CHAPTER XXII.

TOM HICKMAN—MEZZOFANTI AND THE TWO
NEOPHYTES.

“WAS wishin’ I had one of them telegraphs tother Sunday,” said Mike Stoner one day, shortly after Tom Hickman had attended the service at Pumbeditha.

“Why so?” asked the young parson.

Mike put his foot upon a fire-plug near by, ejected his tobacco juice through his teeth, and commenced to explain. “Why you see, Mr. Meagre, Tom went down to Pumbeditha, and I had a notion he’d git on a spree, and I wanted you to guard agin it. He was goin’ to a bush-meetin’, and I tried to talk him out of it. ‘Tom,’ sez I, ‘just think a little. We may all want religion one of them days, and you are going down there to make fun of it. What you do to-day may rise up agin you some time.’ Tom said he never thought of that, and promised me he’d go to your meetin’.”

“And he did come,” said Mr. Meagre, “I saw him after service, and he told me I might thank you that he was there. That only goes to show that you may be an instrument for good, and ought to use your influence.”

"That was a small matter," said Mike.

"Yes, Mr. Stoner, you call that a small matter, but we have no right to say which of our words and actions are small and which are great. Your word in season that Sunday morning may mark the turning point in Tom's life."

"Yes, Mr. Meagre, but I was ashamed afterwards of the argements I used with Tom. I thought 'bout that sarmont you preached once: don't know how you sed it, but the *idee* was that a feller who sarved God just for fear the Devil would git him if he didn't, and nothin' else, might be a selfish man. I think like you sed, that a feller ought to have higher motives. Tom eat supper with us next night after he come home, and me and him and Kitty was talkin' over the matter, and we all three concluded that most people treat the good Lord very *mean*. They just use Him for a convenience to help them when they get into the big scrape, and if they didn't think they'd get into the scrape they wouldn't sarve Him at all. Don't you see? Fact is, I couldn't sleep all night to think of the way *I'd* been treatin' Him. If any feller'd a treated me in that way—kind of toadied me, not 'cause he liked me, but to save his own bacon—I'd a been down on him sure. It's onprincipled."

"There is a great deal of truth in what you say, Mr. Stoner," said the young parson. "We ought to love God for what He is in Himself, and for what He has done for us, but most people are blinded to that. Still, you had a right to urge the consideration you

did with Tom, as a great though lesser motive, and I am glad that you talked with him as you did afterwards. I want you and your wife to help me in that way, and God will make your efforts successful."

"Will be glad to do anything I can," said Mike. "Tom was uncommon interested in your sarmont that day, and talked lots about the way you tuck his hand, and walked away out of the church gate afore you let it go. And you may think it strange, but he liked it that you called him '*Tom.*'"

"O no," said the little preacher. "It is not strange that he should be pleased with that kind of familiarity. You know Lamb?"

"O yes," said Mike; "'taint nigh as strong as mutton."

"But I mean Charles Lamb—a man whose name was Lamb. He was an English wit and poet, and had a very genial nature, although he had some bad habits. But what I was going to say about him was, that he speaks of having loved some one because he was the last man that called him '*Charley.*' All men with warm hearts have such feelings. It was very strange and sad for me to leave home and school; and nothing made me feel that I was among strangers more, than the fact that people called me '*Mr. Meagre.*' But still it was all right, and I would not like people generally to call me anything else."

"O no," rejoined Mike; "you are a minister. But now, since we are talking about it, it does seem strange for you to call me Mr. Stoner. Nobody else

does it. Even the aristocracy, that I don't 'sociate with, call me Mike, and if you'd talk about Mr. Stoner they wouldn't know who you meant. It makes me feel kind of not at home when you put a handle to my name, and I hope that you will just treat me like you treat Tom. It's more nateral."

"Very well," said the young clergyman.

"You seed Tom to-day, didn't you?" asked Mike.

"Yes," answered Rev. Petit. "I came past the building at which he is working, and stopped to have a chat with him."

"Talk right sharp about his jinin' the meetin'?"

"No sir: I talked most of the time about bricks and mortar, and told him something I had read in an encyclopædia about Roman cement. But I expressed my gratification at seeing him in church, and asked him to come and see me, and think I made him feel so easy in my company that he will be apt to accept the invitation. Then I can talk to him about his union with the church."

"That's the ticket," exclaimed Mike, slapping his hand upon his thigh. "And now let me tell you, parson, that what you did worked fust rate, for last night Tom axed me if I wouldn't come with him to see you."

"I hope you agreed to do so," said Rev. Petit.

"Yes indeed, and I told him he needn't be more afeerd of you nor of a little child. So one of them evenings me and Tom'll get on some clean clothes, and pay our best respects to you."

"Do so," said the young parson, heartily shaking Mike's horny hand.

"I will, Mr. Meagre. Good-bye."

A few evenings after this Mike and Tom knocked at the pastor's study door, and received a hearty welcome. Both had on clean shirts and linen coats, and wore their Sunday boots and second best pants. Tom sported a breastpin with a green glass set in it, larger than any emerald among the crown jewels of Europe.

"I am glad to see you. Please be seated," said the parson.

"Obleeged to you. Tom, take that cheer. I think I'll set where I did when I come to see about gittin' married," said Mike, squatting on the ottoman, and depositing his hat—a straw one this time—as he had deposited it on the former occasion. Tom took the chair, but insisted upon holding his old Guiaquil in his hand. The visitors were soon at comparative ease, although at times neither seemed to know what to do with his hands and feet. At first Mike's knees were on a level with his chin, but after a little while he stretched his legs out at full length, and leaned back against the mantel. Tom tilted his chair back a little, and put the outer side of his left foot flat on his right knee, and then the persons of the men seemed to be properly and comfortably adjusted.

"You've got lots of books, Mr. Meagre," said Tom, looking up at the single case, in which about three hundred volumes were ranged.

"Not very many, Tom. You ought to see Dr. Kay's."

"Got more'n you?" asked Mr. Hickman.

"O yes," said Rev. Petit. "If all the walls in this room, and another one like it, were covered with shelves, they would not hold all the volumes he has."

"Gemmini!" exclaimed Tom.

"Well, now, I'd like to see all them," said Mike.

"So would I, just for curiosity," chimed in Tom.

"Well," said Mr. Meagre, "if you go up there, the Doctor will show you through."

"Must have a power of books — more'n in a bookstore," said Mike.

"Yes," said Rev. Petit, "and some single books that he has are, perhaps, worth more than all I have."

"Did you ever read all of them?" asked Tom, pointing to the pastor's nest-egg of a library.

"Not all of those that you see there, Tom. Some of those are dictionaries — all of those in the lower corner shelf," said the parson, reaching back, and throwing open the glass doors.

The visitors arose to take a good look. "Rec'on if a man'd swaller that big feller he'd talk more hifalutin' dick than Bill Bottles," said Tom.

"Mr. Meagre," broke in Mike, "s'pose you show us one of them Latin and Greek books just for curiosity."

"Yes, I often thought I'd like to see one of them once," added Tom.

"This one is the Bible in Latin," said the young parson, handing down a yellow-edged copy of the Vulgate.

"The a, b, c's the same as English," remarked Mike, "only the words is different."

"Yes sir. This is a part of the Bible in Greek," said the clerical showman, opening a copy of Van Ess's edition of the Septuagint.

"Chicken scratches!" exclaimed Tom, incontinently. "Often heard of them, but never seed 'em before."

"This is German," continued the parson, as he laid his hand on a volume of Zollikofer's sermons that Dr. Kay had given him.

"It looks like the old country," suggested Mike. "Should take that to be genewine."

"*This* is Hebrew," said Mr. Meagre, as he took up the Bible in that language. "You read this backwards. See, it commences here at the back part of the book, and you read it from right to left."

"Well now, I never!" said Tom. "Mr. Meagre, s'pose you read a little of that just to let a feller see how it goes."

"be-rē-shīth bâ-râ ě-lō-hīm ěth hăsh-shăma-yim ve-ěth hâ-â rētz:"

commenced the learned and accommodating pastor, parrot-like, following the words with his finger for the benefit of his visitors — and for his own.

"Now what does that mean?" asked Tom.

The young Rabbi translated the sentence with the aid of his memory, in the language of the first verse of Genesis, as set forth in the King James's version.

"Well, I'll declare. Sounds like as if a body had mush in their mouth," said Mike. "Got any other kind?"

"None, except an Italian grammar and a French dictionary that belonged to my sister."

"He's show'd us enough," said Tom.

"I suppose so," remarked Rev. Petit, replacing the books and closing the case.

"Yes indeed," said Mike, "never spected to see that much. Wish Kitty'd a been here. It's monsus interestin'."

The two men were in evident admiration of the young clergyman's erudition, which made him feel badly, for he did not like to humbug them, but the efforts he honestly made to assure them that he was no scholar were accredited to his modesty; and thereafter in their lives had any one spoken of Porson or Melancthon as great linguists, Mike and Tom would in all probability have referred to Rev. Petit Meagre, as being entitled to a niche as high up in the temple of fame as either of those worthies. Some of the compliments paid to him caused a mischievous smile to play over his face. "How little capital it takes to trade with some people," thought he, "and how many there are to take advantage of this fact! Now if I had Brother Bottles here, I could take some verb through the Kal, Niphal, Piel, Pual, Hiph'al, Hoph'al, Hithpa'el, or talk so learnedly about the 'Dagesh forte' and the 'composite sheva,' that he would shrink from any idea of a controversy with me in the future." But the mere thoughts of these familiar forms and terms reminded the juvenile incumbent of his first lame attempt to acquire a knowledge of the learned languages, and he was humble enough.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A DRIVE WITH TOM HICKMAN—FAITH.

THE visitors soon re-seated themselves, and after a while the talk turned upon the church, and the personal interest they ought to have in the Divine Redeemer's kingdom. After this, the parson prayed with them, and gave them each a cheap English translation of Thomas à Kempis, bearing the imprint of the Presbyterian Board of Publication. When they were about to leave, Tom nudged Mike, and said, "You'd better ax Mr. Meagre."

"O yes," said the stirred-up man. "Mr. Meagre, Tom wanted to know if you had any way to git out to your country appintment next Sunday?"

"Yes sir," said the parson. "Mrs. Colonel Burke, who lives near Salem church, attends service at Mr. Corneel's church in the morning, and she has promised to take me out in her carriage. But why do you ask?"

"Nuthin, only thought he'd like to hitch up the old glass-eye in a tilbury, and take you out."

"Very well," said Rev. Petit: "I will give Tom the preference, if it will not put him to inconvenience. I will have an opportunity to decline Mrs. Burke's invitation to-morrow, and am glad of it; for I fear

that I impose on her kindness by going with her so often."

Tom's face brightened. "You needn't fear of 'posin' on Mrs. Burke," said he, "for I helped to fix a bake-oven out there, and I know she 'spects you very high, and it might be more agreeabler to go with her and her darters; but if you don't mind ridin' with a feller like me, I'll be glad to take you."

"I would sooner go with you, Tom, this time," said the parson.

"Very well then. The critter's very gentle, only she's a sugar-tail, you know, and she's a little onrestless, bein' its fly time."

"I will think it a favor to ride with you, Tom, and would not mind to have a spirited horse, if you are a good driver."

"O," said he, "I am *some* at that. Never had but one hoss that give me any trouble, and that was that little bay mare I got of Jim Smith. She didn't look like much of a hoss to drive nether. Body'd a thought they could a cotched her by the hind heels, and run her over the road like a wheel-barrow, but she was uncommon wicious. You see Sam Dover, that was learnin' blacksmithin' with Jim, he completely ruined her dispersition. But old glass-eye's safe for sartain."

The next Sunday Tom drove up to the door with a tall, agate-eyed, thin-tailed horse, bestrapped with a profusion of halters, martingales, and fly-nets, and hitched to a no-topped buggy, painted red and yellow.

"Whoa, Ball," said he, as he jumped out, and holding the reins in one hand, reached across the pavement, thumped against the front door with the butt of his whip.

The young parson heard the knock, and looking out of the window saw his friend. He quickly put on a linen duster, slipped a manuscript into his pocket, and was soon seated by Mr. Hickman's side in the wagon. His chaperon's white wristbands were turned back "to kill," and that gentleman drew the ribbons with the air of a showman driving forty horses through a village before a massive gilt band-wagon. The Rev. Petit noticed with satisfaction that his friend took a pride in being seen with him.

"Strange, Mr. Meagre," said the kind-hearted man, as they rode along, "six months ago I'd a been ashamed to be seen with a minister, and now I'm only too glad to have a parson that ain't ashamed to be seen with me. Fact is, I've got dif'rent ideas of religion from what I used to had. Used to think it was a dry affair, 'ntended only for curus old people, but now I think its 'ntended for everybody, and if understood right will make 'em happy."

"Certainly, religion is intended to make all people happy," said the youthful minister. "Who has the most right to be happy, Tom — the man upon whom the wrath of God is resting, or the man who has God's favor, and knows that His love and power are pledged that all things will work together for his good?"

"Why the last one you said," answered Tom, "that stands to reason."

"You are right, sir," said Mr. Meagre. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. Religion is 'joy unspeakable.'"

On the way back Tom asked: "Mr. Meagre, don't them pleasures of being a Christian reach out to everything?"

"Of course," said the little preacher. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is and that which is to come. The Christian ought to derive more joy from God's bright heavens and green earth than any one else. Look at that beautiful sunset, Tom. What does it suggest to you?"

"Never thought of that before," said Tom, after gazing for a moment. "It looks like as if Heaven and Earth melted into one another. That yaller looks like glory shinin' clean down on the mountain, and lightin' the way up through the clouds. It makes a feller feel a sort of lovesick after somethin' he might have, and ain't got yit. Puts me in mind of one of them psalms Kitty read to me one night. Don't just recommember what the words was, but anyhow they kind of lifted a feller's thoughts up to the sky."

Mr. Meagre recognized the poetry in his uneducated friend's nature, and took occasion to tell him about Jacob's vision, and the Saviour's words to Nathaniel. "Christ," he said, "is the Sun — the Light of the

world: the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. He unites Heaven and Earth. By Him the blessings of God like heavenly angels come down to us, and by Him we, like the angels, may go up to Heaven. See to it that His life becomes yours, Tom; trust in Him, and all will be well."

"Hope I'll do so," said Tom, "but what made me ax that question about religion bein' in everything, was the way it works on Mike. Been watchin' him, you see, and though he's got as much humor 'bout him as ever, he allers seems thinkin' and prayin'. Yister-day evening we walked out to his wheat patch, and you'd a took him to be the most thankfulest man you ever seed. His eyes filled up, and he seemed sort of sayin' grace, like before eatin' all the time. And then he seems to think more of even dumb brutes;—not that he was ever wicious to 'em, but now he has a real feelin' for 'em. Believe his dog and cat likes it better since he jined the meetin'."

"Grace produces just such effects on the heart of man," said Mr. Meagre. "Religion is a life, and it underlies and enters into everything just as a man's natural life does. It just lays hold of a man's natural life, raises it up, and sanctifies it. And Tom, grace refines a man—it gives him finer feelings and better manners. Did you ever see a Christian woman that did not keep a clean house, and love flowers? or did you ever see one that was not modest and polite?"

"Never tuk much notice till here of late," said

Tom, "only of Kitty. She always was clean, and fond of mornin'-glories. And John Bolton's wife that you buried! How kind that woman was to every one! and how she did like that rose-bush of her'n! She *was* a good woman. I often think of them things — that is of *late* — but somehow you can't git fairly into religion, or rather git it into you by just thinkin'. It seems outside of you, much as you worry your brain about it."

"That is true, Tom. The Holy Spirit must do a work there," said the pastor.

By this time Old Ball had brought the parties to the edge of the town. As they were driving through the street Tom remarked: "One thing troubles me, Mr. Meagre. See them fellers before Hottle's tavern? Well, them's my old 'sociates, and they think hard of me, 'cause I don't run with them so much any more. They say I am getting too good, and think myself above 'em. But while I don't 'prove of all they do, and cut up with them so much like I used to, I ain't got a bit of spite agin anybody, and know I am as bad as the worst of 'em."

"Treat them kindly, Tom," said Mr. Meagre. "Show yourself to be honest and consistent in your efforts to do good, and they may be won to Christ by your good example. See how much Mike Stoner is doing in that way."

"Yes," said Tom, "Mike's doin' a good work, and I hope to profit by his example. I spend most of my evenins with Mike and Kitty, and like it fust rate.

Fact is, I spects to board with 'em. You know my wife's dead a long time, and I've got no one to do for me since Kitty's married. But I'll treat the boys right for sure, and if ever I jine the meetin' I'll have some of 'em in 'fore long, if the good Lord blesses me in it, and you say He is more willin' to save men than we are to have 'em saved."

When the young parson got out of the buggy, he thanked Tom for his kindness, but Tom insisted upon it that the favor was "on tother side." "I'd like to take you out to Salem's every time," he said, "but I spects to part with glass-eye in a day or two, bein' as feed's high, and I've got no use for the critter durin' the week. Howsomever, if you git into a scrape 'bout goin' out, let me know, and I'll skeer up a riggin'."

Although Mr. Meagre seldom rode with his friend after this, he saw him very often, and talked with him a great deal. Tom was always at the church door before service. After shaking hands with the minister, he followed him into the church, put his hat on the window ledge, rested his arms on the back of the pew in front of him, and listened intently. It was not long, either, before he united with the congregation in celebrating the central mystery of our holy religion. The day on which he was confirmed was one of tearful joy to Mr. and Mrs. Stoner, and the influence of the new disciple was manifested by the fact that about a dozen men, who had long spent their Sundays about Hottle's tavern, crowded regularly into the two hindmost pews of the church; and in the course of time

the young pastor was rejoiced to see most of these persons at Tom's side before the altar, when the blessed Eucharist was administered.

About a year before Mr. Meagre resigned the Gainfield charge, his faithful friend Hickman fell from a scaffold, and injured himself so severely that he did not survive many days. But during the few days that he lingered his pastor was nearly always by his side. When the last communion was given to him, his two friends partook of it with him, and all seemed to be strengthened by it. The prospect of death did not make the poor sufferer sad. Once, indeed, a cloud overshadowed him. Then, instead of looking at Christ, he had commenced to look at himself, and found so much to condemn that he became despondent.

Mrs. Stoner, who was standing by the bed, said: "Tom, do you remember the man that killed the pedlar out in the country?"

"Yes," said Tom.

"Well," said Kitty, "that man felt guilty enough. His feelins were awful when he was in jail, and that was mebbe right, even as it's right for us to feel our sins; but more depended on the *Gov'ner's* feelins towards the man than on his own."

"Right, Kitty," said Tom, "and God's the Gov'ner in my case—that is, He's got the pard'nin' power, ain't He?"

"Yes, Tom, and He would not that any should perish; and since Christ has suffered in your place,

he can be just, and yet the justifier of them that believe. Only have faith, Tom."

"Lord, increase my faith," said the sick man.

And God did increase his faith. Thereafter he constantly rejoiced in hope of the glory of God. "Mr. Meagre," he said, "that time I heard you preach in Pumbeditha you told about faith. You said a man was justified not by *offerin' to* God what he had done for himself, but by *takin' from God* what Christ has done for him, and faith is that which takes it."

"Yes, and even faith is the gift of God. It is a disposition and power to receive Christ, wrought in the heart by the Holy Ghost," remarked the pastor.

"Yes, I know," said Tom. "It's more than just bein' determined to think you'll be saved. It's the Spirit's work. Dr. Kay come over that one night not long ago in a sarмонт, and made it very plain."

"Yes, Tom, I remember that sermon myself," said the pastor. "The Doctor gave us some very clear definitions of its workings, and will be glad if they have been blessed to your good."

"They have—they have," said Tom, "and Mr. Meagre, I thank you for all you've done for me, and you Kitty, and you Mike."

"Thank *God* for everything," said poor Stoner, bursting into tears.

"I do, I do," said the dying man. "Now, Mr. Meagre, read about the rod and the staff in the dark valley."

This request was complied with, and then Tom said: "The valley's all bright to me, Mr. Meagre — brighter than that sunset was. You were right. Christ is the Sun. Christ is the Way and the Truth, and the Life. Christ is everything."

With these words trembling on his lips, one of the young parson's warmest friends fell asleep in Jesus. Michael Stoner and his wife mourned for their deceased friend as one mourneth for a brother, and yet they sorrowed not as those that have no hope. A large number of Tom's acquaintances assembled at the funeral, expecting to hear a flaming panegyric on the dead man's character. But only a few remarks were made. In these the wondrous grace of God was magnified. Then the simple, beautiful burial service was read, and the body laid to rest in hope of the resurrection of the just.

An elder's wife afterwards expressed some doubt about Tom Hickman's state in the other world, and recalled some acts of his life to bring her husband into sympathy with her views; but some other people were more hopeful in regard to the case, and the memory of that plain, generous-hearted man lingers as a fragrance in the heart of the young parson, and perhaps in the hearts of a few others, to this day.

CHAPTER XXIV.

EFFORTS TO PLEASE THE PEOPLE—SPECIMEN
BRICKS—NO. 1. A PRESSED BRICK.

MRS. LINK lived on the outskirts of Gainfield. In order to get to her house, it was necessary to leave the pavements, walk through the narrow dirty alleys, fighting your way with lazy cows the whole distance, and then either climb a fence and cross a low wet lot, or else follow a crooked lane half a mile around. This, however, did not deter Mr. Meagre from going to see the woman, although he did not always accomplish the object he had in view, for he seldom gained admission to the house. And yet Mrs. Link complained bitterly of her pastor for not visiting her.

In the course of time the young parson was led to the conclusion that his dear parishioner was in the habit of hiding from him, and that her Jeremiads were only intended to screen her the more securely against suspicion. One day he was fully confirmed in his opinion. He went to see her, and did see her *peeping around the bake-oven*, as he approached the house. Fearing that he might fail to find her at home again, he hastened to the front door, knocked, and being asked to walk in, did so quickly, but with all his haste only in time to see her retreating upstairs.

"Is Mrs. Link not in?" he asked of her mother, who was sitting in the room through which the fugitive daughter had just passed.

"No sir," answered the good woman, positively.

"Is it possible, Mrs. Wilt?" asked the Rev. Petit. "I thought I saw her in the yard as I was crossing the meadow a few moments ago."

"She hain't been home these two hours. Talked about goin' to the store, but I reckon she's only at some of the neighbors'."

"You had better go in search of her," said Rev. Petit, "as I am anxious to tell her how often I have been here of late."

The old lady put on a sun-bonnet and went out, slamming the door violently after her. Mrs. Link evidently thought her pastor had taken his departure, for she came bouncing down stairs, and exclaimed as she jumped into the room: "Well, I'm glad that little pest's gone. He's allers pokin' round a body. Rec'on he wants me to come to sacrament, but I ain't"—here she discovered her mistake, stopped short, and stood dumb with confusion. "Thought—thought you'd gone out," she stammered at last.

"It was your mother that went out," said Rev. Petit; "I am still here, as you see, and whatever I might have wished you to do when I first came, I cannot now urge you to come to the communion until you have heartily repented of your sins. Then I think you had better come, for you perhaps stand in need of something to strengthen you."

The young parson felt badly enough at finding such a laxity of morals among his people: he feared this was only a sample of the spirit that many of them had, and as might be expected, he proceeded to give Mrs. Link a gentle lecture, telling her how wrong it was to attempt to deceive one whom God had placed over her, and who was anxious to do her good. Of course he dwelt most upon the fact that God was omniscient, and that the sin was after all against Him.

While he was discharging this painful duty Mrs. Wilt returned. She discovered the "state of the war" as soon as she opened the door. "That's right, give it to her, Mr. Meagre," she exclaimed; "I always told Bec you'd catch her in one of her lies, one of them days. Here she sets up in the loft lookin' out of the little gable winder half her time, for fear you'll come, and if she ain't up there when you cross the lot, she tries to 'scape up, and yet she goes on awful 'cause you don't come to see her. For my part, I think it's wrong to cheat a parson that way."

"But are you not a partaker of her sins, Mrs. Wilt?" asked the young parson.

"No sir: I didn't tell her to hide," said the woman.

"But you told me she was not in the house, and tried to make me believe it," said Rev. Petit.

"Mebbe I did," quoth Mrs. Wilt, "but I am a Presbyterian, and you hain't got nothin' to do with me."

Encouraged by the example of her mother, Mrs.

Link grew bold. "That's right, mam," she said, "don't let him 'pose on you. He shan't 'pose on me neither. Never did like his meetin', and am goin' to jine the Methodists the very first time they have a revival."

The young parson said he had no objection to her changing her church relations, and hoped she would be improved by it.

It appears that Mrs. Link attempted to carry her laudable purpose into effect, but the Methodist minister said he had enough to keep him busy in doing his own bad members over again, and could not undertake his Brother Meagre's. This remark served as a sort of counter-irritant, and Mrs. Link returned to her old spiritual home. Afterwards she got to be a right sensible kind of a woman.

CHAPTER XXV.

EFFORTS TO PLEASE THE PEOPLE—SPECIMEN BRICKS—
NO. 2. A BRICK OF A YARN, IN BATS—FIRST PART OF
THE BRICK.

"THERE has been a requisition for you, Mr. Meagre, since you were last here," said Mrs. Middleton one day, a few hours after the young parson had arrived in Pumbeditha.

"From the governor of a neighboring State?" asked Rev. Petit.

"O no," said the good lady. "One of our members would like to see more of you."

"Who is that?"

"Mrs. Trimble."

"Mrs. Trimble!" exclaimed the young clergyman in surprise, "I go to see her, with all the rest of our people who live in the village, every time I come here."

"Yes sir, I know you do, but she wishes you to make their house your home during some of your trips to Pumbeditha."

"You astonish me, Mrs. Middleton," said the young parson. "I thought the people had come to recognize *your* house as my home while in the bounds of this congregation. I am sure that I will be more available if everybody knows where to find me, and that I can work to more advantage if I have a regular point of departure. I have a room here, with what books and linens I require, in it; and I hope my members will not ask me to commence such a system of ecclesiastical vagabondism, as I have discovered going from place to place to be."

"I thought of all that when Mrs. Trimble was here," said Mrs. Middleton. "I especially remembered your aversion to strange beds, but could say nothing; for much as we wish to have you here, I would not like to appear desirous of monopolizing you."

"What did you say to Mrs. Trimble?" asked Mr. Meagre.

"I simply told her I would make her request known to you," replied the good woman.

"Was she urgent?" asked the young parson.

"Yes sir: she said that she would take no denial, and begged that you would fix a time."

Rev. Petit Meagre walked up and down the room a few times, and then went and reclined upon a lounge. Resting his hand upon his head, and stretching out his slippered feet, he looked intently at a spot upon the ceiling. At first his brow wore something of a frown, but this was soon displaced by a smile that Mrs. Middleton thought peculiar.

"A penny for your thoughts," she said. "Your face reminds one of an April sky: I am glad to see the clouds dispelled so soon by sunshine."

"Mrs. Middleton," said the young parson, "there are some of our members, such as Brother Early, who would like me to spend more time with them at their homes, if consistent with my engagements. *But Mrs. Trimble does not want me.* I am seldom mistaken in my estimate of human nature, and I know enough of that good sister to be assured that my presence in her house would make it a purgatory for her. She is always frightened half to death when I make a call that she knows will not extend over an hour; and when I leave she draws a long breath, as though she experiences as much relief as I did when Mrs. Hayfield called the dogs off of me that night."

“Why, Mr. Meagre!” exclaimed Mrs. Middleton, “what possible motive can the woman then have, in insisting upon having you stay with her three days at once?”

“I have a theory about that,” said Rev. Petit; “Mrs. Trimble has been talking about me, and fearing that what she said will reach my ears, wants to throw sand in my eyes, or perhaps desires to make some reparation. Have you never known that system of compensation to be adopted?”

“O yes,” said Mrs. Middleton, “I think I have, since you call my attention to it.”

“Mrs. Trimble,” continued the young parson, “measuring the act by the annoyance it would be apt to cause her, thinks it would be a great favor to provide for my entertainment. The fact of her doing so, she supposes, would be regarded by me as proof positive that she is my unwavering friend. At any rate, she would think it a piece of charity sufficient to cover any sin she might have been guilty of, as far as I am concerned. We Protestants, you know, are apt to believe in some kinds of supererogation, or that some of our better deeds will atone for some of our worse ones. But the probability is, that Mrs. Trimble was so earnest in her invitation because she had full confidence that it would be declined. I have a distinct recollection of having once said in her presence, that I could not yield to such solicitations except under very peculiar circumstances; but such circumstances may

even now have combined to make me depart from my rule."

"What in the world has put all this into your head, Mr. Meagre?" asked Mrs. Middleton.

"It is said," replied the young clergyman, "that a celebrated naturalist has lately constructed a fish from a single scale, and I have as much data to go on as he had. When I was here last there was a little buzz, to which I closed my ears as sedulously as possible. But I could not help but glean that *some one* had been making free and disparaging use of my name. I have now an intimation of the *person* thus employed, and sensitive as I would be to the charge of having accused any one falsely, I will be content to rest under the imputation, if I am not borne out by the facts in the case when the end is known. I often wish that I could get rid of these intuitions by which I am led to conclusions—generally correct ones. But by way of recording my opinion in advance, I beg leave to ask a few questions in regard to Mrs. Trimble's visit."

"Well, Mr. Meagre," said Mrs. Middleton, with a smile, "I know comparatively little of what is said in the congregation, and always make it a point to say nothing to you of what I happen to hear; but I suppose that if I am called to give evidence, I dare not refuse."

"No, madam," said the young parson pleasantly, "you have no right to refuse to testify before the proper authorities, and may be glad enough if I do

not yet have you before the vestry to testify in the case."

"That would be a great note. I suppose the indictment against the poor woman would be for inviting you to accept her hospitality. However, I am not afraid that you will magnify her offence by bringing it before the church council; and if I will stand absolved in your own mind from the charge of 'common gossip,' you can proceed with the examination," said the good woman, as she laid down her knitting, and dropping her hands in her lap, looked straight into her pastor's eyes.

"Well, to begin," said Rev. Petit, sitting bolt upright, and putting on the semblance of dignity. "Will you please tell the court whether or not Mrs. Trimble has been in the *habit* of visiting you?"

"No sir," was the reply, "she has not been even an occasional caller. I do not know that she was ever in the house before the time just referred to."

"Did she appear easy in her manners while she was here?"

"No sir, she always seems to be embarrassed in my presence when I chance to meet her, although I see no reason why she should be."

"On what *day* did she come to see you?"

"Let me see. It was the last Monday in June; you had left here early that morning to go on a visit to your father."

"Did you say it was on *Monday*?"

"Yes sir."

"Is not Monday her wash-day?"

"I happen to know that it is."

"Will you please tell the court at what hour of the day she was here?"

"About noon, sir."

"Is not that an hour at which it would be doubly difficult for her to leave home?"

"I think so, as she would scarcely be through with her washing, and as twelve o'clock is her regular dinner hour."

"Will the witness be kind enough to state what kind of a bonnet Mrs. Trimble wore when she made the call referred to?"

"The same one that little Hattie was unfortunate enough to say looked Irish. Your honor will remember that I had to express the hope that my little granddaughter would not make remarks about people's clothes."

"The court remembers the remark just referred to, but simply wishes to know, officially, whether or not Mrs. Trimble was dressed up in her Sunday clothes?"

"She was," said the witness.

"A few more questions, if you please, madam: When Mrs. Trimble called, did she seem anxious to introduce Rev. Petit Meagre as the subject of conversation?"

"Yes sir, she introduced his name before she had fairly taken her seat."

"Did she seem to feel called upon to avow that she was her pastor's devoted friend?"

"Yes sir."

"Did she declare emphatically that she had never abused him?"

"She did."

"Was this before any one had accused her of having been guilty of such a thing?"

"Yes sir."

"Had she any animadversions upon people who carried news to preachers?"

"Yes sir."

"And hinted at some particular instance in which this was probably done?"

"She did."

"Did she intimate that perhaps she had been the victim of some slanderous tongue?"

"Yes sir."

"Did she try to find out whether anything of the kind had come to the ears of her pastor?"

"Yes sir."

"And then after all of this she extended a cordial invitation to him to become her guest?"

"Even so, sir."

"The witness can stand aside. It is apparent enough to the court that this extraordinary visit of Mrs. Trimble had some procuring cause. She had about as much relish for it as a man has for a business call upon his dentist. The fact that she went to the trouble to dress up and come here on Monday, at an hour when the work of washing was complicated by the duty of getting dinner, is highly presumptive of

the fact that there was some immediate impelling motive. Had she called on Doctor Forceps at that hour, I should have been certain that she had the toothache; and it may be taken for granted that she heard of something that threatened to mar her relations to her pastor not long before she left home—something that seemed to require immediate action. Nor is it hard to discern the mainspring that has set all this machinery in motion—there was an evident attempt at propitiation. The bench is of the opinion that Mrs. Trimble will be *cured* of her propensity to do business on false pretences. Meanwhile the court is adjourned.”

“Mr. Meagre,” said Mrs. Middleton, “did not Mr. Middleton tell you what passed when Mrs. Trimble was here?”

“He did not. Was he present during the conversation?”

“No sir, I was alone when the sister called.”

“Did you tell him anything about it?”

“I did not.”

“How then could he tell me about it?” asked the young parson.

“I do not see myself how he could have done so, and only inferred from your approximation to the truth that some one had given you an idea of what passed,” said the good woman.

“I heard nothing of the matter before you spoke of it just now,” said Rev. Petit, “and yet I felt prepared to give my judgment in regard to it. We will see how near right I am.”

CHAPTER XXVI.

EFFORTS TO PLEASE THE PEOPLE — SPECIMEN BRICKS
— NO. 2. A LITTLE PIECE NECESSARY TO MAKE THE
PARTS FIT TOGETHER.

THE conversation just referred to took place on Friday afternoon. Nothing more was said upon the subject until Monday morning, when Mrs. Middleton playfully said to her husband, in the presence of her pastor, that she had been in the witness-box a few days before, for the first time in her life.

“Where was the sessions of the court held?” asked Mr. Middleton.

“In the room here, and Mr. Meagre was both presiding judge and examining attorney,” said the good lady.

“Yes sir,” said the young parson, “and the only witness we had hinted that one Melville Middleton had perhaps had the private ear of the court, and given such information as enabled his honor to ask some questions that proved pertinent to the case in hand. I have a notion to subpoena *you* as a witness. Whom will I get to serve the notice? Where is Mr. Bottles?”

“He was in Ohio when last heard from. I do not think you can command his services without a special

permit from the governor of that State," said Mr. Middleton.

"O well, never mind," said Rev. Petit, "I will issue a bench-warrant, and execute it myself."

"There is no use in that. I am willing to testify if I can explain any mystery ; but I do not know what case is before the court."

"Well, allow me to ask you a few questions, Mr. Middleton," said the young parson. "Were you present during a conversation that took place in this room a few weeks ago, between Mrs. Trimble and Mrs. Middleton?"

"No sir."

"Did Mrs. Middleton tell you anything about that conversation?"

"No sir."

"Then you could not have reported it to one Petit Meagre. But do you know anything about Mrs. Trimble's visit at the time referred to? Please tell us all you know in regard to it."

"I do know something about it, although my knowledge of the affair is altogether a matter of accident. I was in Doctor Arlington's office about noon one day, and Mrs. Trimble passed along the street. When she was opposite the door she met Miss Needles, the seamstress, who asked her where in the world she had been all dressed up on wash-day, just at dinner time. Mrs. Trimble replied that she was obliged to put on her things and go up to Middleton's to get herself out of a scrape ; she had hardly got her

hands in the suds that morning, before her girl had informed her that some one had told 'Meagre' all she had said about his having 'such fine stuff in his clothes.' — She further stated that she went to ask Meagre 'to come and stay at her house, so that he would not believe that she had made any remarks about him; that it just took her to "pull the wool over" a preacher's eyes, and that she was pressing in her invitation because she knew well enough that it would not be accepted; she expected to save her meat and her manners too.' "

"Why, Melville!" exclaimed Mrs. Middleton, "why in the world have you said nothing of this to me before?"

"I suppose, my dear, I had the same motive you had in saying nothing to me of Mrs. Trimble's visit. Neither of us thought the matter of much importance, and perhaps we both have a disrelish for street scandal."

"But why have you told Mr. Meagre so plainly what you heard?"

"Because he asked me directly, and I could not prevaricate. Besides, I supposed that he had some reason for wishing to know the whole truth, and I think perhaps he ought to know it. I am certain, too, that he knows how to estimate such things, and will not allow his mind to be unduly influenced by what that poor ignorant woman has said."

"Certainly not," said the young parson. "I call upon Mrs. Middleton to bear witness that I had my

ideas of the case before I heard your testimony; and I think I would scarcely be fit to be her pastor, if in treating of Mrs. Trimble's malady I should be actuated by any feelings of resentment."

"But, my dear," said Mrs. Middleton, "the difficulty is that Mrs. Trimble will think you told Mr. Meagre what you heard."

"So I did, when he asked me," said Mr. Middleton, smiling, "and no doubt Mrs. Trimble's fears have been excited in advance, for I came out of the office just as she had finished her speech, and passed on; and Miss Needles turned back and followed her, as I supposed, to tell her that I had been within hearing distance. But the conversation was held in such a loud tone that a person would have had to be deaf as an adder not to have heard it. I can assure the woman that I was an unintentional and unwilling auditor."

"What you have just said," remarked Mrs. Middleton, "accounts for a question or two that Mrs. Trimble asked me yesterday. She stopped me as I came out of church, and inquired if I had made her request known to Mr. Meagre, and what he had said about it. I told her that I had done so, and that he would answer her in person. She then asked, in her peculiar way, whether Mr. Middleton did not sit 'right smart' in Doctor Arlington's office. I told her he had been there a great deal of late, helping the Doctor to make some microscopic examinations of an insect they had found in the growing wheat; and then she asked me if he told Mr. Meagre 'right smart of what he heard

people say when they passed by.' I told her he did not generally do so. I can now divine the object of her questions, although they were mysterious to me at the time she put them."

Rev. Petit declared himself satisfied. Mr. and Mrs. Middleton laughed heartily, and asked what action was to be taken in the case. The young parson reaffirmed that his course was marked out. He preferred, however, to say nothing about it for the present, as he wished the whole responsibility to rest upon himself. He thought he was competent to settle the score.

The next day, when about leaving for Gainfield, Mr. Meagre called at Mrs. Trimble's door, and said he had heard of her request and would comply with it. She could expect him as her guest the next time he came to Pumbeditha. When this announcement was made, Mrs. Trimble looked as if something had hit her right in the forehead; and from that moment she was beset by a terrible nightmare feeling, that lasted until the young parson's promised stay at her house was over. She was evidently "cotched in her own trap," as she expressed it to Miss Needles, "but then," she added, "it's raal mean in Meagre to be so deceitful. He told as how he wouldn't accept no invitations from nobody."

"O yes; but Mrs. Trimble," replied Miss Needles, "you 'member he said as how if he did 'cept it must be under perticler circumstances, and I reckon he thinks as how them circumstances has ariz. I must give Meagre right, there."

"Well, I thought he said he'd *never* do it, and people ought to be took at what they says," rejoined Mrs. Trimble.

"That's just what Meagre's a doin'," said Miss Needles, "you 'sisted on his comin', and he thinks as how you meant it; but there's one consolation: Middleton couldn't a told him what you said that day comin' down street, or he'd a never told you he'd come. People says he's oncommon proud about goin' where he's not welcome."

"It would be a great satisfaction to think he didn't know what I said to you that day," said Mrs. Trimble. "Howsomever, I'm in for it."

Mrs. Trimble was in for it, but she tried to get out of it. A few days before the time for Mr. Meagre to come, she had a note written to him, saying that her husband was at work in the country, and that they had no horse to go to the cars for their 'beloved pastor.' But for that one thing she would be glad to have him as a guest. But Rev. Petit wrote back that he had often walked from the depot, and could do it again; and as that was the only difficulty, Mrs. Trimble might regard it as obviated, and expect him. He also inclosed a note to Mrs. Middleton, requesting her to put his wrapper, slippers, and a few changes of linen in a basket, and send them to Mrs. Trimble, as he expected to avail himself of that good sister's proffered hospitality. This note gave Mrs. Middleton the first intimation that *she* was not to entertain her pastor for once. Mrs. Trimble delivered the note

herself, and intimated that she would like to get rid of her bargain, but Mrs. Middleton declined to interfere with the pastor's arrangements, and so sure enough Mrs. Trimble was "in for it."

CHAPTER XXVII.

EFFORTS TO PLEASE THE PEOPLE—SPECIMEN BRICKS— NO. 2. THE OTHER END OF THE BRICK.

THERE was no earthly use for Mrs. Trimble to get into a flurry because her pastor had accepted her invitation to become her guest. He was not hard to please, and she might have entertained him to his entire satisfaction without any trouble to herself. The house she lived in had plenty of spare room, and her husband was a good provider. To be sure there was no style about their way of living, but everything was good and substantial, and from the garret to the cellar all was neat and clean enough to satisfy the most fastidious taste. In fact, Mrs. Trimble was one of the most particular of the particular in this respect. No trace of dirt was to be found on the bare space around the rag carpet, or on the door-sills. The six tumblers, the empty decanter, and the two wine-glasses on the bureau in the front room, were all as clear as crystal. Had the woman known that a

spider had spun a web in any corner of the ceiling, she would have got up at midnight to brush it away ; or had one of the yellow wooden chairs that were ranged around the walls been misplaced, she could not have slept until it was restored to its exact position. To keep things in order was the burden of Mrs. Trimble's life ; she was always cleaning, and never looking with any degree of satisfaction upon what would have satisfied most clean people — a sort of Martha, cumbered and anxious about these things.

Moreover, before her own household and intimate associates Mrs. Trimble was brave enough — had a great deal to say, and no little acrimony in her way of saying it. Indeed, she was what the knowing ones denominated “a lemon.” But before her pastor, or any one that she regarded as moving in a higher sphere of life, her lionlike boldness was suddenly exchanged for the instinctive tremor of a hare. The distinction made between people in this respect was entirely her own, and she could not bring herself to meet every one in that common-sense way that would have put her and everybody else at ease. Besides, in this instance there was a consciousness that she had been guilty of speaking improperly of her pastor ; that her motives had not been pure in asking him to her house, and her fears made a nervous coward of her, for now she was in constant dread lest Rev. Petit would open his batteries upon her. “Hence these tears.”

Mr. Meagre had perhaps a more correct estimate

of Mrs. Trimble than that good woman had of herself. He was not afraid that things would not be good enough for him. He was certain that he would not have to eat from a dusty plate; and although he might through motives of kindness be required to sleep upon feathers—his favorite abomination, he had no fear that he would be troubled with any domestic leeches. But he knew that there was more or less irregularity incident to staying at strange places, and above all, that Mrs. Trimble would be terribly embarrassed by his presence, and so he felt that it would have been far better for all parties if he had been left in what the geologist would call his "*habitat*." But Mrs. Trimble had insisted upon his coming, and would unquestionably make capital out of it if he declined, and he therefore concluded to go. One thing was certain. He had no desire to make the poor woman uncomfortable. He might have made her feel like a toad under a harrow, but that would have been cruel and sinful, so he resolved to be as pleasant as possible—to return good for evil, in the hope that his parishioner would come to the conclusion that he was not a basilisk, and that she could be far more easy with him under her roof than if he had been a rattlesnake.

At the proper time Rev. Petit came to Pumbeditha, and went directly to the house of Mr. Zebedee Trimble. As was expected, the master of the house was not at home, and it devolved upon his wife to meet the minister and do the honors generally. Ac-

cordingly when the young parson entered the front door, the proprietress of the establishment made her appearance, wearing a smile, but evidently a forced one. Beneath it there was a play of nerves highly suggestive of the word "agony."

"Now, Mrs. Trimble," said Mr. Meagre, "I am here at your own earnest request, and if you allow me to be any trouble to you, it will be entirely your own fault. Let me tell you that I never drink tea nor coffee, and that you need never boil a pot for me. I will be as well satisfied with a roasted potato for dinner as I would be with canvass-back ducks, and would prefer a piece of bread and butter in the evening to waffles and chickens — the stereotyped dish with you folks when you have company. I have only to ask that you will give me the hardest bed in the house, and plenty of cold water to wash in. Have you a bath-tub?"

"Ya-a-s sir."

"Where is it?"

"We ain't got none."

"O, I thought you said you had. Have you a big wash-tub?"

"No, we ain't got none of them."

Rev. Petit paused. "You have no wash-tub then!" he said at last.

"O yes, we is got some."

"Very well. I thought you said you had not, but if you have it I will thank you to let me have one in

my room before to-morrow morning. I will carry the water up myself."

Mrs. Trimble promised to grant this boon, and the young parson thanked her. She then went out to see about her domestic affairs, and the Rev. Petit was left alone. He looked about the room for something to read, and found a country paper three weeks old, a Franklin Almanac, and a volume of Congressional Documents — the latter, Herndon's Exploration of the Amazon, which proved to be quite interesting. Besides this, he had a Testament in his pocket, and knew he could command a Bible in the house, so that he was not likely to suffer for want of literature.

The dinner, which was nearly prepared when Mr. Meagre arrived, passed off well. Mrs. Trimble looked as if she was about to cry all the time, but her pastor told her an anecdote that came very near making her laugh. Indeed, the youthful clergyman did all in his power to make his hostess feel easy, but it appeared that she scarcely knew her head from her heels. After dinner she felt herself driven by necessity to put on her best bonnet and run up the back way even to Mrs. Middleton, to ask her "what them things was Mr. Meagre was so fond of." She had "allowed to give him waffles and chickens for supper," but he wanted a dish of "steer tripe in a canvass bag." She "spected it must be cooked like old Mrs. Britton did the plum-puddin' at Christmas."

Mrs. Middleton told her there must be some mistake, and assured her that unless Mr. Meagre had changed

very much in three weeks, he would be satisfied with anything. Mr. Meagre called at Mr. Middleton's a few hours after Mrs. Trimble had left, and explained the mystery. There was no use to try to explain it to Mrs. Trimble. Every effort at that only pushed her more deeply into the mire. Eight or ten times the young functionary remarked that he liked to eat just what the families with whom he was staying would have cooked for themselves if he had not been there; but Mrs. Trimble only stared incredulously, and would persist in getting into a flurry.

Once, about four o'clock, the good woman put her head into the door, timidly, to see if the animal she had left there was safe, and free from any signs of a dangerous outbreak.

"Please send the children in to me," said the young parson.

"Ya-a-s sir. Sol'mon and Dan'l, come here; the min'ster wants you."

At the word of command Sol'mon and Dan'l approached, and their mother withdrew. The little fellows, who had very pretty faces, and were plainly but cleanly dressed, stopped right inside of the door, and could not be prevailed upon to come nearer to the man who had them under his pastoral charge, and could have loved them on that account if for no other. The youthful shepherd went through the usual routine of coaxing, but with apparently little success. He gave this up at last and took to his book, hoping that if left alone the gentle lambs would grow less timid by

degrees. In the course of fifteen minutes he happened to take his eyes from the page, and Sol'mon, the younger of the two, had advanced to the middle of the room. He had one thumb in each corner of his mouth, stretching it wide open, while with his front fingers he pulled down the skin beneath his eyes—trying thus to attain to a raw-head and bloody-bones appearance that he fancied would either amuse or frighten his clerical friend. The Rev. Petit had seen children do this before, but the fact that it was now done for his special benefit struck him so comically that he broke out into a sudden snorting laugh, which frightened the poor child half to death, and made him scream with terror. The elder brother joined in ready chorus, and the mother, hearing the alarm, ran to the rescue.

The scene was ridiculous enough. Mr. Meagre said that he had unintentionally frightened the little boy, and the little boy's mother said, "There was no use for Sol'mon to git skeered at a min'ster." The "min'ster" had an idea that Sol'mon's mother was more badly "skeered" than Sol'mon. She was about to lead the juveniles out of the room, but as Rev. Petit thought she was going to flog them unnecessarily, he insisted upon it that they should be allowed to remain; and going to his linen overcoat, he produced a brace of fine oranges, which mollified the fears of the little ones, and made them his fast friends forever.

"There now," said Mrs. Trimble, as Sol'mon and Dan'l went to work on the golden fruit, "be good boys, and don't go so near Mr. Meagre when you are a eatin'.

You'll spile his clothes. *I always did say* a min'ster ought to wear fine clothes, and that I didn't like to see 'em siled."

"Did you?" Mr. Meagre could not but ask, as he looked into the woman's face.

Mrs. Trimble's eye blenched. She looked as if she remembered that she had not always said so, but her pastor relieved her embarrassment by changing the subject of conversation.

No doubt Mrs. Trimble felt that day the truth of the proverb, "Misfortunes come not singly." From the time that her beloved pastor had entered the house everything had gone wrong, and the end of evils was not yet. As has been intimated, waffles and fried chicken were on the bill of fare for that evening, and, as a general thing, Mrs. Trimble had no difficulty in preparing them. But that day Mrs. Trimble's fire would *not* burn, and her chimney *would* smoke. Mrs. Trimble seemed to think that the fire had a will, and was stubborn. Indeed, she declared that his Satanic majesty was in the fire and in the chimney, and had she been able, she would have knocked the laws of nature into a cocked hat, and made the fire burn in spite of the wise and benignant principles according to which such things are regulated.

The difficulties just mentioned had, however, been overcome. The coals had at last been put under the wood, the wood had become dry and commenced to blaze. The chimney had become warm, and the smoke curled beautifully out of the top of it. Everything

was going on "right," when Mrs. Trimble was called from the kitchen by the shrieks of her little boys. But when she returned she suspected that the girl was allowing the chicken to burn. Mrs. Trimble, in a fit of excitement, went to push her away, and upset the gravy. Then Mrs. Trimble did certainly lose her temper, and angrily ordered "Suse" to go for cream to make more. When "Suse" returned Mrs. Trimble attempted to snatch it out of her hand, and knocked it on to the floor, breaking the cup, and spilling what the exquisite called the "extract of the cow" on the newly scoured boards. It was the last that Mrs. Trimble had in the house, and it became apparent that "Suse" would have to go to one of the neighbors to beg, borrow, or buy some more. Mrs. Trimble raged like a tempest in a tea-kettle. She fairly boiled over, and poor Suse had to take the scalding vapors of her wrath. The unfortunate domestic was called "awkward" and "good-for-nothing." Suse in turn became obstreperous, and threatened to leave on the spot. Mrs. Trimble wished all the preachers were in Jericho; she was sure she did not thank any of them for coming near her, and then the amiable hostess was ready to go through the floor when made aware that the doors were open, and her pastor had probably heard everything she said.

Mr. Meagre *had* heard it all, and pitied the woman from his heart. He wished he had not accepted her invitation, not because of what she had just said, for that was all fun, and did not take away his appetite,

but because he saw that his parishioner was stinging herself almost to death.

A little later it was found that all of the fuss was for nothing. When the chicken was brought to the table, it was evidently not burned at all. But Mrs. Trimble's face was very red.

After supper things went on a little better. The young parson tried his best to play the agreeable, and Mrs. Trimble became more calm and collected. Besides, "Zeb'dee" came home that evening, and relieved his wife of the duty of entertaining her pet preacher. Brother "Zeb'dee" was a plain, quiet man, and with him Mr. Meagre spent that beautiful evening very pleasantly. After prayers the two went out on the back porch and talked about "bissness," the "craps," and the "meetin'."

"Bin very mooney to-night," said Mr. Trimble, about the time it was thought to be late enough to retire.

"Yes sir : the moon is very bright," said the young parson.

"Quite a mackeral sky, too," said Mr. Trimble.

"Yes sir : very beautifully mottled," said Rev. Petit.

"Think we'll have some kind of weather soon," opined Mr. Trimble.

"Quite likely," said Mr. Meagre, as the parties carried their "cheers" into the house and started for bed.

The young parson asked for a long candle, and his request was granted. When he got to his chamber,

he found that Mrs. Trimble's nervous fears had led her to misapprehend his desires in regard to his sleeping arrangements as well as everything else. There was no prospect of a morning bath, but a tremendous feather bed had been placed there to receive his little body. Mrs. Trimble had probably an idea that he had taken especial pains to tell her that he would not like to have a tub placed in his room, and so she only furnished him with a little blue-ringed pitcher that would hold a quart of water. Upon examination, however, it was found that there was a bag of chaff under the feathers, and upon this Rev. Petit thought he could rest comfortably. He resolved, too, to get through with his ablutions as well as possible in the morning, and go up to Mr. Middleton's after breakfast for a regular plunge.

As, however, the young incumbent had no idea of going to sleep immediately, he placed his candle on the end of the mantel near the head of the bed, said his prayers, unrobed himself, and laid down to read. Before a great while he was so much disturbed by the mosquitoes that came in through the open window, that he was obliged to put out the light and smoke a cigar to get rid of them. After that he lay and looked out upon the "mooney" scene and "mackerel sky," until he fell into a gentle slumber.

It had been comparatively easy to pull the feather bed down on the floor, but the next morning Rev. Petit found it so large and unwieldy that he could not get it up again. At night he found that some one had

done it for him, and that person or some one else had to do it over again the next morning, and so on after every night that the young parson slept in the house of "Zeb'dee."

Mrs. Trimble did not enjoy herself very much during the time that Mr. Meagre was her guest, and was glad when he was obliged to leave for Gainfield. When about to take his departure he asked her whether he should leave his wrapper and slippers where they were, or send them back to Mrs. Middleton. The poor woman, not knowing what answer to give, simply drawled out, "Si-r-r-r?"

"Shall I come here next time?" asked the Rev. Petit.

"Spect I'll be all upside down. Goin' to bile apple-butter," stammered Mrs. Trimble.

"What! so early?" asked his reverence.

"Children's gittin' a breakin' out. Spect they'll have the measles 'bout then," said the poor woman, shifting her ground.

The young parson thought it was perhaps uncharitable to throw the responsibility of determining his future whereabouts upon his hostess, and besides he was quite anxious to get back to his old quarters. So he said he would go to Mr. Middleton's, but told Mrs. Trimble that if ever she wanted him again she should only come and invite him.

Mrs. Trimble never did so. She was kind enough to say, however, that "the little min'ster would be nice to have about the house if a body wasn't so much

afeerd. He's a little onrestless at night, and throws the feathers off a good deal, but that aint nothin'; and it's a body's own fault if they git worried. Often thought it was a punishment on me that I was so flustered, 'cause I 'sisted on his comin when I didn't want him, and I've larned that a body don't gain nothin' by bein' a hyp'crite."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

UNFRIENDLY RELATIONS—TONY TOMPKINS— A BRICK IN HIS HAT.

ADAM KRIME and Christopher Ludwig owned and occupied adjoining farms, and ought to have lived together as quiet and peaceable neighbors. But these two old men once had a notorious quarrel, growing out of a case of trespass. Mr. Krime's hogs got into Mr. Ludwig's cornfield one day, and did a great deal of damage, which was provoking enough; but whether the injury was not attributable to the bad condition of Mr. Ludwig's fences, rather than to any uncommon propensity in Mr. Krime's hogs for which their owner was to blame, was the mooted point. Mr. Ludwig alleged that if Mr. Krime would feed his hogs at home, they would not break into other people's enclosures in search of something to live upon. But

Mr. Krime felt that the charge of neglecting his stock was a slander so patent to the community, that he contented himself with retorting that if he had a mill and could feed other people's grain, it would be an *easy matter* to keep his hogs home.

As might have been expected, the breach thus opened was not easily healed. There were not only mutterings of wrath, but once or twice the gates of Janus were thrown wide open and the parties proceeded to actual war, which led to litigations, and made the feud a chronic one.

The extent to which the difficulty was carried was due, in a great measure, to one Anthony Tompkins — a rare old fellow, of whom a passing notice must be taken. Uncle Tony, as he was familiarly called, was a celebrated wag. He usually acted as an ostler at the tavern, but sometimes dug the gardens about town and helped the neighboring farmers to plough and gather their crops. For the first of these employments he manifested a decided preference, as it not only gave him time and opportunity for an occasional chat with the old cronies who gathered around, but put him in the way of getting many a dram at the expense of those who came there to wet their own whistles. It was said, upon undoubted authority, that once or twice, in a decade of years, Tony had been quite sober. But the words, "slightly inebriated," expressed his usual condition, if not his normal state, although he occasionally was so overcome by certain influences, that Brutus like, he would

"Greet the earth—his mother."

Mr. Tompkins had a great deal of droll humor, and was fond of taking the advantage of credulous people. He could tell a long-drawn story, or suggest a quaint, mischievous idea by a mere passing remark or innuendo, with such imperturbable gravity, that even those whose experience led them to doubt his veracity were reassured simply by looking at him.

As a general thing, too, he succeeded in clothing his thoughts in language that had a double meaning, thus preserving the form of truth while there was in his whole spirit the essential essence of a lie; and when taken to an account for what he had said, he usually fell back upon his "very words," and contended that his meaning had been entirely misapprehended.

It was Tony who told old Mr. Gottlieb that Mr. Meagre's silk dressing-gown, velvet smoking-cap, and embroidered slippers, were the habiliments of a conjuror, and excited the fear that some evil was to be apprehended through the agency of the young divine. Indeed, it was even intimated that Anthony had levied black mail upon the old landlord, and got his flask filled more than once by hinting that he had some kind of moral or magical influence over Rev. Petit, and could get him to practise or desist from his occult arts at any time.

And yet Mr. Tompkins professed to have a great respect for the young parson. He took off his hat and made a low bow whenever he passed him, and seemed quite jealous of his good opinion.

One day Mr. Meagre met the old man "weaving his winding way" through one of the back streets. This meeting was unexpected to Tony, but he had enough presence of mind, ready wit, and control of body, to change his stagger into a limp and mutter something about "tight shoes."

The young parson smiled and passed on, but came across Tony a few days afterwards at the village blacksmith shop.

"Uncle Tony," he asked, "why do you not quit wearing 'tight shoes' and come to church?"

Tony paid no attention to the first part of the question, but said in reply to the latter part of it, "I've got such a sore eye."

"What is the matter with it?"

"I hurt it taking in corn," was the reply.

"Uncle Tony," said Rev. Petit, "I wish you would answer me one question."

"Very well, your reverence, what is it?"

"Did not that corn pass through a still-pipe before you took it in?"

Mr. Tompkins was taken all aback, and racked his brain for an evasive reply; but finding none, said, half coaxingly, "Mr. Meagre, please put that question a little different."

"Very well," said the young parson. "Did you not hurt your eye taking in corn after it had been distilled?"

"Knock under, Mr. Meagre," said Tony, "won't

take in any more that way, and the next time you meet me there won't be anything 'tight' about me."

If Mr. Tompkins had not a bottle in his pocket, he probably kept his promise not to drink any more — till he got back to the tavern. He afterwards said the little preacher was a "dead shot," and probably believed his own words, as he was very careful not to come within range for some time.

CHAPTER XXIX.

OPEN HOSTILITIES.

Now the two men that Anthony Tompkins delighted to tease above all others, were Adam Krime and Christopher Ludwig, and the difficulty between them afforded a prolific occasion for him to do so. To excite the wrath of the one and the fears of the other was a favorite pastime with him. Each party was induced to tell him his version of the matter, and was told in return of some boast or threat purporting to come from the other, that only served as fuel to the flame.

In all of this the *quasi* friend of the belligerents was not actuated by any feeling of malice, but simply by a spirit of fun, which was nevertheless reprehensible, because it led to a great deal of evil. One election day he persuaded Mr. Ludwig that Mr. Krime

was very much afraid he would give him a thrashing — an entire misrepresentation, as Mr. Krime had a great deal the more grit of the two, although much the older and weaker man. Mr. Ludwig was thus induced to attack him, and the two got into a regular fist fight. Of course this disgraceful proceeding was soon stopped, and Mr. Ludwig was glad of it, for he had been led to underrate the courage of his antagonist.

Tony ran around and made a great show of trying to separate them after some one else had performed that duty. He caught hold of Christopher's coat tail, calling out, "Hold 'em, hold 'em."

"Ya, ya, holt us," said Ludwig. "Two of you shall holt Grime, one's genug zu holt me."

The blame of this disreputable affair was properly put upon Mr. Tompkins, who assumed an air of injured innocence, and when that failed him, he plead that he "know'd they couldn't hurt one another more nor two old dogs that had no teeth." Alas! Tony did not see the effect of angry passion upon the moral nature of his friends, and upon the community at large. So completely had his own moral sense become blunted!

After this, as may be supposed, the love between Mr. Krime and Mr. Ludwig did not increase much. They often shook their canes angrily at one another as they passed on horseback, but there was not another real battle for nearly a year, when one took place that might easily have ended seriously.

One afternoon, late in the following summer, Mr. Krime was at his spring getting a drink of water, and as he was about hanging up the gourd he had been using, the barking of dogs, the squeal of hogs, and yells of Mr. Ludwig, sounded over the meadow loud enough to strike the tympanums of his almost deaf ears. He, of course, knew what was going on, and with all the celerity that his infirm body was capable of, went into the house, took down his gun from the prongs on the board partition, put his hair pouch and his powder-horn over his shoulder, and started for the scene of action.

His approach was so screened by the bushes and tall corn, that his enemy, who was urging on the dogs, did not see him until he emerged from his cover about twenty feet before him. Then Christopher Ludwig suddenly felt that his time on earth was over. He would have begged for mercy, but his "voice stuck to his jaws."

With trembling hand, but deliberate intention, Mr. Krime took aim at his adversary and fired, but fortunately for all parties, his arm was so palsied by age that he could not hold the piece on a level with his eye, and by the time he drew the trigger the muzzle had been so depressed by gravitation that it was within six inches of the ground, and the load ploughed up the dust at his feet. The recoil of the gun knocked Mr. Krime head over heels, and Mr. Ludwig retreated with all possible dispatch. He mounted his horse as soon as he got home, and taking a circuitous route

came to the village to "swear his life" against his neighbor. His frightened look and awful story, soon collected a large number of loafers and boys around the magistrate's office. While the justice of the peace was trying to get a clear statement of the difficulty, Tony Tompkins called out from the crowd, "Take care; don't let Adam Krime in with that gun!"

That was enough for Mr. Ludwig. He got out of the back door and ran away.

Tony said he "went so fast that his coat tail stuck out straight enough for the boys to play marbles on it," but Tony was *lying* — under a mistake, for Mr. Ludwig had no coat on. He did run, however, as fast as he could until he got to his horse, then mounted and went home by a more direct way than that over which he had come. Once safely in his own house he barricaded the doors and prepared himself generally for a siege, and for the next six months he moved about his farm with the caution of an early settler, fearful that every bush might hide a tattooed savage armed with poisoned arrows, a tomahawk, and scalping knife.

But Mr. Ludwig had not left the town fifteen minutes before his infuriated rival entered it. He too had come "to dake de law;" was willing to be qualified that Ludwig had knocked him down with a stone, and showed his face bruised by the breech of the gun, as evidence in the case.

The magistrate saw fit to bind both parties over to keep the peace. Not satisfied with this, they carried the case to a higher court, where it was "continued

over " for several terms, when it was determined by awarding to one of the belligerents one cent damage, and requiring each to pay his own costs—an amount that exceeded Rev. Petit Meagre's salary by about one hundred dollars.

As intimated before, the feud became chronic; and there would, perhaps, have been no abatement of the outward manifestation of mutual hate, had it not been thought necessary to form an alliance to put down a common enemy.

CHAPTER XXX.

EFFORTS TO PLEASE THE LITTLE FOLKS.

IF Rev. Petit Meagre had a ruling passion, it was, perhaps, love for little children. He knew all the Charlies and Hatties in the neighborhood, and scraped an acquaintance with every two year old that would play with him over the back of a car seat when he travelled. No lovelier sight for him than that presented by the bright little creatures, who, fresh from their afternoon baths, played in front of the houses on the fine summer evenings. Yea, he felt an interest even in the little back street urchins if they showed any positive character, and had their faces and clothes soiled with nothing but *clean* dirt; that is, with pure

clay or mud without any admixture of molasses and applebutter. Indeed, the young parson's propensity to form intimacies with such juveniles had become notorious. He had played ball with his Sunday school, and bearded his whole vestry on the subject at an early period of his pastorate. He had upset Mrs. Rate's ideas of propriety on the willow whistle question. He had even bought marbles for little Dick Spaddle around in Cow Alley, and done many other things not recorded in this book, but treasured up in the minds of his people.

But Rev. Petit had an inner circle of young friends — little favorites of his own selection, who came to his room, built houses of his books, and played under his study table with impunity. With these the young parson lived his boy-life over again, entering into all of their innocent amusements, sympathizing with them in all their little world of care, making kites, mending tops, and, tell it not in Gath! even rolling over the floor at times in a general tussle. Between the youthful shepherd and some of these lambs, there grew up a feeling and an interest that was almost vital.

Among the little ones who were in the habit of climbing upon the young parson's lap, or standing by his chair and hugging him, were Paul and Clarence Winthrop, two of Dr. Arlington's grand-children. Paul was every inch a boy, but staid and thoughtful, debating everything before he entered into it, and then going ahead with all the earnestness of a states-

man who feels that the destiny of nations is staked upon an issue; and Clarence, a fair-haired, blue-eyed little enthusiast, so nervous that his mother said a cup of strong tea or coffee would make him as drunk as a fiddler.

Late one winter the Rev. Petit was storm-stayed at Pumbeditha beyond his usual time, and the little Winthrops were with him a great deal. One afternoon he induced the youngsters to show all the things in their pockets, and along with the eight-by-ten handkerchiefs, straps, strings, nails, screws, pencils, and other articles usually found in a boy's depository for his personal property, Clarence pulled out a few strips of fine French tissue paper.

"Where did you get that, Clarence?" asked his reverence.

"Ma had it to cover her gilt frames," replied the boy.

"Has she any big sheets of it?" asked Rev. Petit.

"O yes, Mr. Meagre," said Paul, "I saw it in the bottom of her wardrobe, and we brought this up to ask if it wouldn't make first rate kites."

"Yes, Paul," said Rev. Petit; "and if your ma has about two quires of it, and will give it to you, I will make you a balloon."

Paul stopped to inquire how the balloon was to be made, and if it would really go up into the air, but Clarence darted off like a rocket to ask his mother; and by the time his brother had his mind satisfied and

was going after him, he met him returning with the paper under his arm.

"Ma says we are welcome to it," said the little fellow, as, panting with haste and excitement, he placed the package in Mr. Meagre's hands.

"Your Ma is very kind, boys," said the young parson. "This paper is of a beautiful quality, and just the colors I wanted — blue, and red, and yellow. I will alternate them, and then the balloon will be very pretty when it is lighted up."

Rev. Petit had some reputation as a paper balloon builder when a school-boy, and calling to his aid his former experience and tact, he soon constructed a very prettily shaped one — "just like the picture in the Penny Gazette," as the boys said.

"When are you going to send her up, Mr. Meagre?" asked Paul.

"If I can get some wire, a piece of sponge, and some alcohol, I will be ready this evening at seven o'clock, and you had better have your little friends assemble at that hour on your back veranda."

The wire, the sponge, and the alcohol were easily obtained, and at the appointed time there was quite a collection of "wee folk" at the place of rendezvous. The young parson suggested that the balloon should be named "the Lillie," in honor of a Miss Winthrop of two summers, whose bright eyes were peering from a blanket shawl in which her mother had her wrapped.

"Now whom will I get to hold the Lillie up?" asked

the reverend master of ceremonies. "Is Mr. Winthrop not at home?" he inquired of Mrs. Winthrop.

"I am sorry that he cannot be here," said Mrs. Winthrop, who stood by sharing the pleasure of the little ones.

"Are none of your workmen about? It will require a grown person to hold the balloon up while I inflate it, as it is full six feet in length," said Rev. Petit.

"Uncle Tony Tompkins is in the kitchen. Been burning brush to-day out on the farm," exclaimed Clarence, and running in he "produced" the old man.

"Uncle Tony," said Rev. Petit, "just get on this box and hold up this balloon. Take hold of the crown with your thumb and finger. It will 'bear up,' Uncle Tony, but do not let it go until I tell you to do so."

Mr. Tompkins politely acceded to the request. "What in the world are you burning down there that makes you all look so green, Mr. Meagre?" he asked.

"Spirits of wine," replied the young parson. "I thought you were familiar with everything of that kind."

"Will the spirits fill the balloon?" asked Uncle Tony.

"Yes sir," replied Rev. Petit, carelessly.

The little paper structure was soon swelled out to its utmost tension by the rarified air; ascended gracefully until it looked like a twinkling star, then passed out of sight and was heard of no more.

The children were in a great glee. Mrs. Winthrop said that Clarence and Lillie did not get to sleep before midnight, and then dreamed of balloons until morning. The great question with them was, "What

became of the little thing?" Paul soon became satisfied that Mr. Meagre was right in supposing that it had got to the earth in safety some few miles away, but Clarence thought it must still be up in the sky, and called his Pa the next evening to see it. Mr. Winthrop went out to gratify the child, and was pointed to the planet Mars, which Clarence said was "redder than any of the stars, and must be the balloon."

Nothing would now do but that Mr. Meagre must make another, which he promised to do as soon as he could get the paper. This was not effected, however, for about six weeks, as it had to be ordered from the city, and the stationer who attended to it experienced some delays. At length the material came to the delight of the little ones. The balloon was then made and named the "Fair Sister," but as the young parson had not time to preside at the ascension, the gauze-like structure was committed to the hands of Paul and Clarence to be kept for some future occasion.

Meanwhile the first balloon had created some consternation in the neighborhood.

CHAPTER XXXI.

CONSEQUENCES.

"THE LILLIE," as the harmless little paper balloon was named, had been seen by a few of the country people, to whom its appearance was mysterious, as the like had never been known before in those parts. Some said it was "one of them meteors," others pronounced it a "Jack o' the lantern," but Mr. Ludwig was certain the witches had something to do with it.

He came to the village to make some inquiries about it, although he resolved to do this incidentally, and without showing that he was "skeer'd," in the least. The first place he went to was the tavern, and the first person he met was Mr. Tompkins—the man about town most likely to know all about any strange thing that had come to pass.

Tony was prepared for him. He had either received some intimation of Mr. Ludwig's apprehensions, or conceived the original idea of exciting his fears upon the subject; and he met him as one friend meets another in circumstances of sorrow. He extended his hand in silence, shook his head mournfully, then sat down on the bench in the bar-room and buried his face in his check-cotton handkerchief.

In vain did Christopher Ludwig try to appear indif-

ferent. That irresistible propensity in man to pry into a mystery — especially when some evil seems to be wrapped up in the Sibyl leaves — led him to betray his anxiety very palpably, and Tony saw at once that he had the old man completely in his power. And Anthony Tompkins had the conscience to take sad advantage of his friend's fears. He tried to increase these ; sighing like a furnace, and looking as if he expected the heavens and earth to come into violent concussion every moment, and yet giving no intimation by any word of his as to the nature of the dire event that was casting its shadow on his soul.

Old Christopher's curiosity and alarm were soon wrought up to the highest pitch.

"Sagt Dony was faelt?" he asked, so as not to be heard by a young nephew of Mr. Gottlieb's, who was attending the bar in the absence of the old gentleman himself.

"You'll have to talk English to me, Stoephel. I can't understand Dutch," said Tony, walking out of the back door towards the stable.

"Dony ! Dony ! Meister Domkins !" called out Mr. Ludwig, but Tony went on as if he had not heard the voice of his friend. This was only a ruse to get his victim away from the youthful Boniface who presided over the black bottles and green glass tumblers that day, and who might have spoiled the fun.

As was expected, Mr. Ludwig soon followed Mr. Tompkins to the stable. He found that worthy fumbling over a feed-box, with a peck measure that he

had picked up near the door. "Dony, vat ish de mather?" he asked.

"The matter!" exclaimed Tony, in surprise, "There's enough the matter, when a body's likely to be cotch by the thumbs and tuck up to the moon enny minit, leaving everything behind him," he muttered, as he walked away again from his anxious inquirer, carrying the empty measure as if it were full, and affecting to give some oats to a horse in a remote stall.

Somehow or other Mr. Tompkins was especially devoted to his business just at that time. Indeed, he was one of the "careful and attentive ostlers" you read about in the advertisements of country taverns. No sooner had he "fed the horse" than he took a wooden fork, gathered up all the straw lying around, and began to fix up things generally. But Mr. Ludwig soon obtruded himself upon his reticent friend again:—

"Dony," he said, "ven you dells me vat ish de mather, den ve dakes some schnapps."

Tony considered this proposition for full sixty seconds—as long as he could possibly hold it under debate, and then said, "Well, but don't say enny thing before enny body: wait till we come back, and don't ever bring my name in, if you don't want to see stones fall upwards."

The two worthies went into the bar-room and took a heavy swig—Tony hiding the depth of his potation by putting his fingers closely around the glass. Mr.

Ludwig paid for the liquor, and went back with his friend to the stable.

"Nun Dony," he asked, "vat ish it? De vitches?"

"Yes," replied Tony, with an awful groan.

"De Porror?" (the preacher) asked Ludwig, anxiously.

"Hush! H-i-s-h!" said Tony with a gesture that enjoined caution.

"De Porror? De Meagre?" inquired Mr. Ludwig in a whisper.

"Well, Christopher," said Mr. Tompkins, "I don't like to say much about it, bein as me and the little feller's good friends, and I al'ers tuck his part;" but, he continued, dropping his voice to a very low tone, "you know that night the light was seen in the sky?"

"Ya, vat it vus?" asked Mr. Ludwig, with his mouth and eyes wide open.

"Well," said Tony confidentially, "that night just afore it pear'd so high up, I seed the little feller dealin with familiar spirits. Had something looked a good deal like water, and he ra'ly made it burn."

"Ach, Dony!" exclaimed Christopher, "De Porror kin makes de wasser burn?"

"Well, it was so much *like* water that you couldn't tell the difference first by lookin at it, and he did make it burn, and what was worse nor all, it burnt blue blazes; everybody round got a kind of pale like dead people, only they looked more greenisher. Meagre owned up that it was the spirits that made everything look that way, and" —

"Mine goodness, Dony!" exclaimed Ludwig.

"Fact, Stoephel," continued Tony, "and as I was goin' to say, he had a great big roundish lantern, all kind of colors in it—looked like a witch's concern, and all the spirits went up in it till it got so full it swelled out tight like a pin cushin, and then away they rode, higher nor the hickory pole you Locos put up last fall, and away ever so far."

"Var it vent?" asked the alarmed listener.

"Don't know," replied his informer, "may be to the moon, for all I know. Fact was, I felt such a pulling at my thumbs that I had to take care of myself. Was afraid Gotleib would be without a hostler if I didn't mind, but the last I seed of the curus concern, it was up ever so high, and away over Shaller Creek. Moon wasn't up, or I could a told better if it went towards it."

"It kin git agross de krick?" asked Mr. Ludwig, with increased alarm.

"Yes," said Tony. "You see when it gets so high, the water ain't got no power to draw it down. Reckon that witch-wagon, or whatever you call it, would a gone clean over a big river."

"Vas de Porror in der vitch-vagon?" asked Mr. Ludwig.

"Didn't see him much that night after it went," replied Tony, "but I reckon he didn't go up, for he was about arley next mornin'. But la me, Ludwig! that thing went off without any noise, and I reckon if

it could a got started it would a come back without any more. No tellin' what'll become of us."

By this time, old Christopher, who had been standing before Tony with his hands on his knees, listening intently, became greatly excited. "Och, Dony, Dony, vat vill ve do?" he asked, looking wildly around him.

"Hold our jaws!" replied Mr. Tompkins. "If Meagre finds out how we are talking about him' he'll ride us worse nor the witches ever rode your bay colt."

"Ya, ya," said Christopher, sadly, "he do vat he bleases mit Mongrel, und Grime say he de only breacher as is not afeer'd von him. But, Dony, some de vitches knows vat a body dinks. You dinks de Meagre kin?"

"He told me what was in my mind once or twice," replied Tony, "but I don't believe he'd a cotch me, if I'd a kept my tongue still."

"Den I say all de dime not a word," said Mr. Ludwig.

With all this stuff, and no one knows how much more like it, crammed into his mind, poor old Christopher Ludwig left his friend Anthony Tompkins that day, after rewarding his gross imposition with enough cheap whiskey to make him drunk and worthless for a week. Mr. Ludwig had his own reward in the way of nervous apprehensions, which caused him more than one sleepless night, and some hours of agony during the days and weeks that succeeded. He probably was induced by his fears to take Tony's advice, and "keep his jaw" in the presence of people gene-

rally, but he doubtless told his family of the evil that threatened the community, and did all in his power to avert such calamities as being ridden like a colt, or carried to the moon by the "little porror."

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE RECONCILIATION.

THE young parson was of course left in blissful ignorance of all that had passed between Mr. Ludwig and his friend Anthony, and indeed did not know that "Lillie" had called forth any remarks except from the children, until the second balloon was seen careering over the ancient city of Pumbeditha. Then, some things that had been kept secret were brought to light.

Rev. Petit had promised Paul and Clarence, that if he got to Pumbeditha, "next trip," on Friday evening, he would devote half an hour to their entertainment, and expressed the hope that the "Fair Sister" would afford them as much pleasure as the "Lillie" had done. That Friday came, at length, for the boys, but no Mr. Meagre came with it. He had been detained at Gainfield by a funeral, as usual.

It was almost impossible for the little ones to wait longer; and so they determined to inflate and send

up the balloon themselves. One thing still exercised them greatly in regard to the "Lillie." She had never been heard of; and they wished to devise a plan by which they might learn the fate of the "Fair Sister" that was to follow her. They resolved at last to label her, and pasted upon her very crown these words, written in a boyish hand:

"This balloon was made by Rev. Mr. Meagre. Any person finding it, will please return it to him, at Mr. Winthrop's office, in Pumbeditha."

But alas for the inexperience of the boys! they did not saturate the sponge sufficiently, and let the little structure go before it was properly filled; and unlike the lost Pleiad, it arose only about one hundred feet, passed slowly over the town, and after a short inglorious flight went out in darkness, and fell in Mr. Krime's meadow but a mile from the place where it started.

During the day, Paul and Clarence had been so full of the anticipated pleasure, that they had all of the children in the village, and some of the older folks agog; and Mr. Ludwig, who happened to come to the tavern, was informed by Mr. Tompkins, that a demonstration was imminent. He therefore kept a look out, and was rewarded by a sight of the hideous monster. Mr. Krime too saw it, but as it were, by accident.

Had Christopher Ludwig found the balloon the next day, he perhaps would have feared to touch it; but that pleasure was reserved for Adam Krime, who,

though more pugnacious, was less superstitious than his neighbor. The old gentleman picked it up and carried it home; but as he was unable to determine what it was, he took his wife's advice and put it away until he could ask Tony Tompkins, who was to come the next day and help to plant corn.

The next morning, Mr. Krime brought out the balloon, and asked, "Sagt, Dony, you kin del me vat ish dat?"

"That!" exclaimed Tony, who knew Adam's sensitive point as well he knew Christopher's, "It's a thing to blow up farms. Should think it agin the law to have one of them; a feller might have to look through iron bars if cotch with it."

Mr. Krime dropped the balloon incontinently, backed to the wall, and looked aghast. He was certain it was an infernal machine projected to ruin him.

"No danger of it now more'n of an empty gun," said Tony, picking it up. "See, it's burnt out!"

"Dony," said Mr. Krime, "you dells so many lies as a pody net kin pelieve you ven dey knows you dells de druth. I net dinks dat kin knocks a pody's blantation in bieces."

Cassandra herself could not have worn a look more expressive of meek dejection when Agamemnon hooted at her sad predictions, than Anthony Tompkins wore at that moment. "Well, Adam," he said, not in anger but in sorrow, "just as you'll have it; but mebbe you won't believe that thing could come through the air and burn a barn down."

Mr. Krime's incredulity was gone in an instant. "Dat vas vat I sees last night?" he asked of Mr. Tompkins, who was walking away. "Sagt Dony, vare it kom from?"

"Don't know," said Tony, scarcely looking around, "but it has some writin' on it, mebbe that'll tell."

"Vell, I looks at it den," said Mr. Krime, thrusting his hand into his deep vest pocket in search of his glasses, "I net kin ride rodin mit out mine specs."

The glasses were soon found, taken from the tin case with trembling hand, and placed astride of the owner's nose, who, by the aid of a little learning, found out at length that Mr. Meagre was the originator of the balloon. When this discovery was made, old Adam Krime's utterance failed him for some moments, and he simply tottered about the room in speechless rage. At length the words came tumbling out spasmodically. "I sues dat breacher mit de law," he said, "und dakes all de monish he make mit breachin'; und I poots him in de shail — all de dime I poots him in shail."

"You've got purty good evidence agin him," said Tony.

"Ya, ya," said Mr. Krime, "I keeps dis to brove it to de court house dat he net ish a goot breacher; den all de beoples pelieves me ven I says dey net mus git de breacher to com any more zu dis blace," and the old man gathered up the "Fair Sister" in his arms with a chuckle of rare delight.

"I say, Adam," quoth Tony, "I think you and

Ludwig ought to make up now and jine together to put down the flying-machines: he's as much worried about them as you are."

"Ya, ya," answered Mr. Krime, "I jines in mit Stoeephel Ludwig to trive away de breachers, ven he net togs mine bigs."

The next morning Mr. Krime put on his suit of blue cloth, made when the young parson's father was a baby, and an old-white hat — his royal apparel, worn only on state occasions. He then led from the stable a tall, well-fed, but illy-shaped and awkward horse; took down a saddle that was hanging by one stirrup against the house under the porch roof, put it on the beast, crawled on top of it at the "upping block," and started for the county-seat with the balloon under his arm tied up in a yellow cotton handkerchief. That afternoon, about three o'clock, he returned with the bundle still under his arm. He had failed to get the law, either because no member of the bar would undertake his case, or may be, because no one knew under what statute the offence would come. He had been advised, however, to publish a caution to trespassers, and that evening at his old bureau with brass drawer-handles and desk-like top, he wrote it out. A day or two afterwards, the following warning, written on a piece of rough, time-embrowned paper, with columns for dollars and cents marked on one edge of it with red ink, was stuck up against the village store door:

"dis ish de nodis dat de breachers unt palloons vil net kom

on my bremises als i shutes em shust like eider a bossum oder a mink."

Mr. Winthrop secured this precious document, and showed it to Mr. Meagre one night in his own room, whereupon the young 'limb o' the kirk,' threw himself upon a sofa, kicked up his heels, and laughed. Afterwards he felt badly enough about it, not because he was afraid of being shot like an opossum or a mink, although Mr. Krime probably was in earnest with his threats, but because he did not like the unclerical notoriety it had gained for him, and was sorry that even Mr. Krime should think he would endanger his property. But then he did not think that any blame could be attached to him, as he meant no harm, and had built the balloon so carefully that it was hardly liable to do any damage. Besides he could do nothing to correct the evil impression that obtained in the mind of his aged friend. Mr. Winthrop had gone out to see the old gentleman, and tried to absolve the young pastor from any censure, as he was not accountable for what the little boys had done: but this was construed into an effort to get his reverence off from going to jail and being shot, and so it was concluded that things would have to take their course.

Meanwhile Mr. Tompkins, anxious to make amends for the evil he had done, or perhaps with some design of ulterior mischief in view, had reported to Mr. Ludwig that Mr. Krime was willing to be reconciled with him. At first, Christopher was a little dubious, as

Tony had once told him that "Adam net would fight;" but his doubts were soon overcome, and not many days afterwards, the two old men shook hands over a glass of grog in Mr. Gottlieb's tavern.

"You dakes de vitch vagon a brisoner," said Mr. Ludwig, with a look that was intended to compliment Mr. Krime's bravery.

"Ya," said Mr. Krime, "ven I vent de stairs up zu pull de vinders town, cause I dinks it be's a donner's gust, a little bit ago after while, I sees him, und hollered out zu mine frau, 'Bolly, mine Himmel vat a gomets!' Den ven Bolly run around the house pefore behindt, she net sees him any more, auber I bicks him up to-morrow in the medder, und keeps him zu but the breacher in shail mit him."

"Ya," said Ludwig, anxious to claim his share of credit in the good work, "ven I see der flyin' machine, I runt mit Gashber quick out, und shack up mine vagon vheel und durns him packward, and burdy quick der flyin' merchine dumble on de grount."

Before long, the two old men, warmed by their cups, were vieing with each other in a duet of jargon that was all the more confused because they attempted to talk English for the benefit of Tony, who simply said "yes" or "no," at intervals, and whose only care seemed to be to get a horn of whiskey at the expense of his friends whenever an opportunity to do so presented itself. After a good deal of vehement talk and striking of canes on the bar-room floor, the convention adjourned, fully impressed with the fact that preachers

and balloons were nuisances that ought to be abated; and only differing as to the manner in which this could be most successfully accomplished—Mr. Ludwig being of the opinion that the young parson's witchcraft ought to be outdone by deeper counter-charms, and Mr. Krime advising a resort to force of arms.

Some weeks after this, the young parson was riding in the country near Mr. Krime's place, when looking down a narrow lane, he saw the old gentleman evidently at work. He was certain that it was he—would have known him by his peculiar motions and by the red flannel back of his jacket, if by nothing else, and he concluded to ride in and have a talk with him.

When he rode up to him, the old man was vainly trying to lift the heavy end of a 'rider' upon the crossed stakes of a worm fence.

"Wait a moment, Mr. Krime, and I will help you," called out Rev. Petit, and dismounting quickly, he hitched his horse near a clump of cedar trees, and lifted the rail at which the old man was tugging, to its place.

Mr. Krime walked to the next pannel, and the young parson helped him to fix that, and so on, until the work the old man had proposed to himself was finished. Then the old gentleman turned around and asked of his reverend friend, "Who you vus?"

"Meagre," replied the young parson.

"H-e-y?" fairly screamed the astonished Mr. Krime.

"Meagre," repeated the Rev. Petit, loudly, but complacently.

"Bist du not afeer'd?" asked Mr. Krime.

"No sir," was the calm reply.

"You net knows I shutes de beoples ven dey makes me mat?"

"I know that you shot at one man when you were mad, but I am not afraid that you will shoot me," replied the Rev. Petit.

Mr. Krime looked wildly around as if he were hunting something with which to knock the young divine's brains out, and the savage aspect he wore, reminded the Rev. Petit so much of a man who threatened "to cut his ears off" when quite a child, that he could hardly keep from laughing aloud. He kept his risibility within reasonable bounds, however, but his aged friend, perhaps seeing that the youngster was not scared, dropped down from his impotent rage to a state of indifference, and said, with an air of carelessness, "Vell, I neider bist net afeer'd von you doo."

"I hope not," said the young parson.

"Auber de Ludwig ish. He dinks you a vitch," said Mr. Krime.

"I am sorry for it," quoth the young parson.

Mr. Krime seemed to be taken up with some pleasant thought. At length he said, "I gives you funf und zwanzig cent fur breachin ven you makes out all de dime you a vitch und skeers him kase he togs mine bigs."

"I will do no such thing," replied the young parson.

“Net for veirtel tollar?”

“No sir, not for a quarter of a dollar.”

Mr. Krime seemed utterly astonished at this. He crossed his hands behind him and looked intently at an old stump. The young parson allowed him to indulge in his reverie for some time, and then interrupted it by commencing to read him a lecture. He reminded the old man of his past history as far as he knew it, and especially of his bearing towards Christian ministers, and through them towards that God whose they were and whom they served. He dwelt upon the folly of the course he had been pursuing towards him, pointing out the false position in which he wished to place him in the eyes of Mr. Ludwig, and closed by solemnly admonishing him to prepare for that judgment-bar before which he would soon have to appear.

The old man listened respectfully, but what was said did not seem to affect him much. He was, however, so far mollified as to ask the young parson home to dinner with him. “Bolly kills a fet hinkel und make de noodles, you will go zu de dinner dime!” he said.

The Rev. Petit accepted the invitation, not especially for the sake of the chicken soup, although he was fond of that, but because he thought he had better meet the old man's advances, as it might give him opportunity to have further talk with him. Before leaving the house Mr. Meagre proposed to have prayer with the family, at which Mrs. Krime seemed

greatly rejoiced, and to which Mr. Krime interposed no objections. Poor old man! He asked the young parson to come again, and he said he always thought before, that the preachers were too proud to help to make fence, and that they would do anything for money.

After this, Mr. Meagre visited the old man as often as possible, but was sadly impressed with the fact that old age was not favorable to religious impressions. The picture drawn in the twelfth chapter of Ecclesiastes often came to his mind, and once without saying anything to any one of the way in which he was led to the subject, he preached a sermon on the text, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them."

One day Mr. Meagre started out to see his aged friend, resolved to make a renewed effort for his good. As he approached the house he met Mrs. Krime running towards him in a state of frensied excitement. The old man had just fallen from his chair upon the floor — *dead*.

The young parson was called upon to preach the funeral sermon, and it was really thought by some people that he must have a spite at the old man, and would give vent to his spleen by assigning him a place in eternal torment. When this was not done, his simple discourse upon the vanity of life, and the importance of securing an interest in the atonement of Christ,

was adjudged to be an endorsement of the deceased man's whole character, and it was said that Meagre had "preached old Krime to glory." The young parson had not presumed to pass judgment at all. That prerogative God had reserved to Himself.

The Rev. Petit never met Mr. Ludwig after this, although he tried hard to get an interview with him. The poor old fellow actually thought that his friend's sudden death might possibly be attributed to the agency of the young parson.

"Mebbe de Meagre vorks a spell or drow some 'potecary stuff on de Herr Krime."

All of this was exceedingly painful to the young minister. Some persons there were who ignored witchcraft as a figment of a morbid fancy, and perhaps there were no phenomena here to justify the supposition that sorcery was practised. But old Christopher Ludwig did give evidence of that "strong delusion" by which men are led to "believe a lie," and witchcraft itself was so clearly spoken of in the Bible as something real, that the Rev. Petit Meagre cared no more to have it imputed to him, than any other one of the dark sins that St. Paul mentions in his catalogue of the fruits of the flesh.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

DAVID EARLY AND HIS REQUEST.

DAVID EARLY, whose name has been mentioned incidentally in a previous chapter, was a deacon in the congregation at Pumbeditha, and lived about two miles from that place. Although only about thirty-five years of age, he was very old-fashioned in almost every respect. He had now been married fourteen years, and yet his wedding suit had been preserved in good condition, and was duly worn on Sundays. His coat was a swallow-tailed blue cloth, with brass buttons. It was not quite as high in the collar, and in the gathers on the shoulders, as some of a still more ancient date, but it was quite as short in the body — too short to cover David's vest, which extended about three inches lower down on his person. David's pants were a little tight, and they wrinkled up his legs a spell, but tights were fashionable when those pants were made, and they had originally been kept down by straps of the same material, now no longer in vogue, and at any rate worn out and cut off. Mr. Early wore this attire not because he was too stingy to get anything more modern in style, but because he was not "hard on clothes," and what he had, answered him every purpose. Old Adam Krime's sign of pride was not visible

in the deacon's case, for he never parted his hair, but just combed it out straight all around, and pushed it out of his eyes, from time to time, with his open hand.

David was as amiable as Mr. and Mrs. Hayfield, whose dogs, it will be remembered, worried the young parson so sadly on a certain occasion. And yet David differed from those worthy people a shade or two in character and disposition. They were very harmless, simple-hearted folks, altogether unsophisticated, and yet constitutionally grave and sober. They never frowned, but then they never laughed. Sidney Smith would have startled them, and imposed greatly upon their credulity, for they had no possible idea of a joke. David Early's place in this picture gallery is between them and those mirthful, fun-seeking men, Michael Stoner and Thomas Hickman. A broad smile always mantled his face, and any one but primmered in physiognomy would have taken him at once for a good-natured, accommodating man. He knew that there was treachery in the world, for he had been imposed upon and swindled more than once, but he had maintained his own integrity, and was not suspicious of everybody he met. Although diffident and reserved, he was a close observer of men and things in his narrow circle, and there was generally a great deal of common sense in his droll remarks. He knew no more of the laws of English grammar than most of Mr. Meagre's parishioners, but he read the newspapers, and was tolerably well-informed in regard to the current topics of the day. In short, David Early was

neither a shrewd Yankee, nor yet a jolly green countryman, but a sensible person, more distinguished for his kind-heartedness and generosity than for anything else.

David held his pastor in the highest admiration. He honestly thought Rev. Petit Meagre was a little the best preacher, and the finest little man in the world. In this opinion, his wife Hannah—a tall, plain, honest-hearted woman, coincided, and the whole family seemed to derive a peculiar gratification from doing the young parson honor. Even the little children seemed to look upon Rev. Petit as the very pink of perfection. Theresa and Emma would hail a visit from him as a joyous event. They always saved the largest chestnuts and the finest red apples for him, and the way they would fly around and help their mother when he was expected to supper, was a caution to slow folks. Once he intimated in their presence that he was anxious to get some goose-quills, as he could not write with a metal pen. Before he left the house, they supplied him with a stock that has lasted ever since; and the greatest trouble their mother had with them, for the next six months, was to keep them from unnecessarily chasing and plucking the geese. Even little Petit Meagre, a two year old, named after the young parson, caught the infection. He had been taught to tell people whose name he bore, and after lisping it, was always duly admonished to be a good boy, lest he might bring it into disgrace. One day, after a heavy rain, the little fellow got away from his mother, and attempted to go to his father across a ploughed field.

The result was that he stuck in the mud, and had to remain there until his maternal found and extricated him. That night he besought his father, in childish accents, to haul all the dirt out of the field, lest Mr. Meagre should come, stick fast, and lose his pretty shoes.

Mr. and Mrs. Early thought they could not do too much for their pastor. Had he been a drinker of tea, and had it been customary to sweeten that beverage with molasses, they would not have thought it too good for him if it had been all molasses.

Of course Mr. Meagre appreciated the honest love of these plain persons very highly. He was conscious of the fact that they *over-valued* him; but although perhaps, not very vain, he felt that many other people belonging to his congregations *under-valued* him; that is, they did not magnify his office, nor recognize his honest efforts to do them good; and the affection that the few bore to him as a minister and a man was gratefully looked upon as a sort of compensation for this.

"I expect to stop at your house when I come again. Meet me at the upper depot;" said the little preacher to David, when about leaving for Gainfield one day.

David grinned, promised to meet Mr. Meagre, and went home to tell his family, who, it appears, feasted on the anticipated visit for a fortnight. On the appointed day David went to the depot, but the young parson was not on the train. He had been detained in Gainfield to attend a funeral, and did not get down

until late in the evening, when he was obliged to go direct to Pumbeditha. The next day, after service, he told David the reason why he did not come, and was duly excused.

"The children were very much put out when you did not come," said Hannah, who stood by; "they had saved you some apricots, but we brought them along, and left them at Mr. Middleton's, for fear they might be all gone when you come again."

"Thank the children for me," said the young pastor; "I was as much disappointed as they. I hope you had not gone to any trouble on my account, although I fear you are prone to do so when you expect me."

"No trouble," she replied. "For my part, I am a sort of glad now that you did not come, 'cause your visit would be over now. As it is, we are yet to have the pleasure."

"Yes, Mr. Meagre," said David, "I expect to put *you* to some trouble, though when I tell you what it is, I don't believe you'll object much. I want you to go and see my little sister-in-law, that's a cripple."

"I will go with pleasure," said the young parson. "Where does she live?"

"Well, Mr. Meagre," said David, "it's about eight miles from here, up Shallow creek; a good ways, I know, but Phœbe's to be pitied. She is sixteen years old, and has never walked a step, and no preacher's ever talked to her. Been none in the house since she was baptized."

"That is strange," said Mr. Meagre; "any minister in Gainfield would have come down here and gone twice eight miles to see her, had her case been known. Why have you not told me of her before?"

"She hasn't been in this neighborhood much since you're been here. Hannah's folks moved to Dark county after they lost their property, and just moved back a month ago. And, at any rate, Phoebe couldn't be talked to much, but she's stronger now."

"I will go to see her to-morrow, only you just tell me the way," said Mr. Meagre.

"O, I'll go with you," said David, "and to-morrow will suit me fustrate; the grain's all in, and I have not much to do; and at any rate a body ought to take a day right in harvest for such work."

"Yes, David," said Hannah, deeply moved at the thought of her afflicted sister, "I'd pitch sheaves all day myself, sooner than you shouldn't go, now that Mr. Meagre's so willing."

"Don't cry, Hannah," said David. "The Great Father will do right by Phoebe, too."

"There is no doubt about that," said the young parson. "But how are you to get out there? Shall I get a conveyance of Mr. Middleton?"

David smiled. "I bought the old carryall," said he, "but I haven't took it home yet. Mr. Middleton's got a new carriage. He wrote me a funny receipt when I paid him for the one he had used so long; filled a half sheet of paper, telling all the turns

the old thing did, and how you called it the 'Diligence.' "

"Well, we will go in that," said the parson. "I would like to have at least one more ride in it."

"Hope you'll ride in it often," said David. "But I think we better start very early. It won't be so warm, then."

"The earlier the better for me," said Rev. Petit.

The next morning David knocked at Mr. Middleton's door while the quiet stars were yet visible in the sky, and Mr. Meagre ate his breakfast by candle-light, the only time in his life that he was ever guilty of such a thing in the month of August. The deacon put his saddle in a safe place; hitched his horse to the "Diligence," and at very early dawn started off with his pastor to see little Phœbe, the cripple.

"Know'd I needn't 'pologise for asking you to ride in this concern," remarked David, as they rode along.

"No, indeed," said Mr. Meagre. "It has become almost a sacred thing to me. I have many pleasant thoughts associated with it, and could swell out the account given in Mr. Middleton's receipt into quite a history. I think a contemplative man might make at least a Sunday-School book out of the incidents connected with it. It is said that some of the New Bedford fishermen pet their ships as if they were favorite horses, and I feel like petting the old 'Diligence.' I hate to give it up for that long-coupled shiney improvement Mr. Middleton has now."

David smiled at this declaration, and said it was a strange idea.

“Why do you laugh, and think that what I said is strange?” asked Rev. Petit. “Have *you* never become so attached to an old *hat* that you disliked to exchange it for a new one?”

“Fact,” said David. “That’s the way with these clothes; been wearing them so long that I’d feel strange in any others.”

“See, now, Bro. David!” quoth the pastor, pleasantly, “you are just as much attached to your clothes as I am to the ‘Diligence,’ and I like you all the better for it.”

David smiled as usual, and seemed to think the young divine pretty smart to corner him in that way. “Well,” he said, “this suits me at any rate. It’ll do to fetch Hannah and the children to church, any how. The little ones are as anxious to come as we are. As long as we only had two we could get along well enough without a concern, for Hannah could take one on her horse, and I could take ’tother on mine; but now that we have three it’s a little unhandy. And it don’t make much difference what a man rides in, or what he wears, if only he’s honest and natural.”

“That is true,” said the parson; “more depends upon a man’s character than anything else.”

“Yes, indeed, Mr. Meagre. I know all the sensible people round here, and ’specially them that’s high up in life, don’t think less of an honest man be-

cause he's plain. I've had business with Dr. Arlington, Mr. Middleton, and all such men, and it has never made a bit of difference to them. Never had anybody to make fun of me but one, and that was Tim Sipes. He went to the West with one of the Hubers, and come back after a while drest like a dandy, and give out as how he was a lawyer. Well, I fotch a basket of eggs to town one day, and when I rode up to the store he called out, 'Say, Clodhopper, what's the difficulty with your pants?' Sez I, 'Why my feet and knees have a lawsuit about my straps, and the lower part of my trowsers is going up the calf of my leg as a witness. Mebbe you've come back to plead the case?'"

"That, I suppose, turned the laugh on him," said Rev. Petit, laughing himself.

"Yes," said David, "it did; not that it was smart or original in me, but because people was glad to see Tim took down. But I hated it afterwards, for I was afraid it might a hurt his feelings. I couldn't sleep all night, and went to Mr. Middleton next day and asked him if I hadn't better give myself up to the church, or at least 'pologise to Tim, but he said I had only answered a fool according to his folly. That satisfied me some, but when I got the good Book it said you mussent answer a fool according to his folly, lest thou be like him."

"Yes; but, David, it says in nearly the same place, 'Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit.'"

“How do you make them passages agree, Mr. Meagre? Often wondered.”

“Very easily, my dear brother. Our answer must take its shape from his folly, so far as is necessary to prevent him from being wise in his own conceit, but not so far, or in such a way, as to make us like him. It is to be according to his folly in one sense, but not in another. Your reply to Tim was a sort of self-defence, and took down his self-conceit, and may do him good; but if you had gone on to ridicule him in the same spirit in which he assailed you, you would have made yourself like him.”

“Well,” said David, “a body will get overtaken in a fault sometimes, but I am always sorry about what I do. I often think, though, Mr. Meagre, that I’ve got the worst disposition in the world. This morning I came very near hitting this mare dreadful hard when she bit me in the stable. But it was dark, and she bit me so suddint and so hard, that I was throw’d off my guard.”

Mr. Meagre smiled this time, not at David’s misfortune, but his ideas of his violent temper. “I do not think,” he said, “that the sins you have confessed just now would be regarded as mortal by the Church, especially as you had no settled malice in your heart.”

David seemed relieved by this deliverance of his pastor, but had his ecclesiastical superior flourished his keys and suspended him from the communion, he doubtless would have thought it just, and meekly kissed

the rod. "Well," he said, "I hope I'll be forgiven for what I said to Tim, and what I was going to do to the horse."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

SELF-CONDEMNATION.

THIS conversation set Rev. Petit to musing. "Here," thought he, "I have a perfect Uncle Toby. He would not kill a fly. It is not entirely natural disposition either, in his case, or else he would not be so keenly sensitive to sin. Would that I had more of such people! How different David Early from"—"Compare him with Petit Meagre," said a still small voice under the young functionary's vest. "Or rather leave David Early, a faulty man at best, out of the question, and substitute the One who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, if you want to see some bright lines on a very dark back-ground." "Alas, yes!" thought the young parson, "how great the contrast! How often have I detected in my own heart a disposition to call down fire on poor Cain Mongrel's enemies, for instance! How different from Him 'who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, threatened not, but committed all to Him who judgeth righteously!' Even the spirit with which I have administered rebukes in His holy name, have not

been as Christ-like as they should have been. And then, the other day, when I heard that some poor ignorant woman had said I was proud of my small white hands, I became impatient, and muttered something more like an imprecation than a prayer. Even now I feel indignant, but"—“Don't try to extenuate,” said the still small voice, “you scarcely thought the woman herself believed what she said; you knew that the charge was a false one, and yet your eye flashed, your pale brow flushed, your lip curled, and your heart!—that alas! was the secret chamber where all that unholy fire lay before it flared and burned, and hissed and seared. Yes, it is all true; the sin laid at your door was a contemptible weakness, one that never seemed to have presented itself to your own mind as a temptation; one that you were least willing to be thought guilty of; but Satan knew your sensitive point, and assailed you as he did, just on that very account. And you, instead of parrying his blow, and quenching his darts with the shield of faith, allowed him to get between the joints of your armor. And these are only two instances in which you were angered that occur to you now. Turn over the leaves of your life's book, and every page is scorched and blackened. How different the record of the Meek and Lowly—the Sinless One. O! Petit Meagre, Petit Meagre! How great your shortcomings and your sins! For all of these your heart must lie in ashes at your Saviour's feet.”

While these thoughts were passing through the young

parson's mind, his deacon was sitting by his side, to all appearances deriving a quiet satisfaction from the simple fact that he was in his pastor's company. Turning around at last, he noticed a tear of contrition that was coming down the youthful clergyman's cheek. David was evidently frightened. The usual smile vanished from his face in an instant. "What's the matter, Mr. Meagre?" he asked, in great trepidation. "Did I say or do anything wrong?"

"No, no, my dear brother."

"Are you sick? Whoa, Lyd! Shall I stop at this house and get you some water?"

"Oh no. Go on. I am simply sin-sick."

Poor David was more astonished than ever. It had perhaps never occurred to him that Rev. Petit Meagre had any sins to make him sick. For the love that he bore to him had so completely thrown the mantle of charity over his faults that he could not see them, and as for the dreadful mystery of sin lurking way down in the heart, the good deacon perhaps thought of that as something peculiar to himself. "Now, Mr. Meagre," he said, half chidingly, "you, a minister that can preach so nice, and that ain't stuck up because you're well born and high learnt; that just does all the good you can for everybody—going away out here to see poor Phœbe—you talk that way! It seems different to everybody else from what it does to you."

"Brother David," said the young parson, "I believe that you honestly think I try to be humble, kind,

and faithful, but you surely do not think me sinless, or even without great faults. Do you?"

"No! there is only One that's sinless when a body remembers right, but — but"——

"But what?"

"Why, I didn't think you ministers had to struggle against your own sins like I have. Thought all the trouble was keeping the church members right."

"There is just where you are mistaken, my brother. Perhaps no class of people are more bowed down by a sense of their personal unworthiness than ministers of the gospel. I will warrant that going up on the mount where God appeared, made Moses more humble than he would have been if he had always remained in the valley. Those who study the Saviour's character most, are the least disposed to boast of what they themselves are. I have just been comparing myself with his spotless standard, and God knows, and I know, if you do not, that I have enough to mourn over."

"Feel like as if you don't deserve anything but wrath?" asked David, apparently anxious to see if any one felt like he did, and yet half doubtful whether that could be so.

"Yes indeed, my dear brother," answered the parson, "and I pity the man who does not feel so."

"And what must you do, then?" inquired David.

"Just what you have to do. A minister must trust in the merits of Christ, and pray for grace and strength, exactly like any other poor sinner. We are all on the same level in that respect."

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE ROAD TO PHŒBE'S HOUSE.

WHEN the young parson and his deacon reached the place where Shallow Creek crossed the road over which they had been travelling, David turned off and took up the stream. "This road," he said, "would guide any one right over to the mountain where Hannah's folks live. It is a little rough, but it is shady, and now that the sun's rising, it would be warm any other way. Besides, this is the shortest route. We have now five miles to go."

From this point onward, Mr. Meagre was completely charmed by the natural beauties around him. The route lay through a sequestered valley; it was almost a hidden way, evidently but little travelled. The road itself, which kept close by the stream and crossed it frequently, was rough. Here a rugged rock jutted up from the uneven bed; there a gully required careful driving, and occasionally a deep ravine had to be passed. But God's own hand had completely embowered it with living green. Gnarled oaks, wide-armed beech trees, and thickly foliaged bushes, seemed not only to canopy, but wall up the way, so as to keep out the sun's rays, except now and then, when they would break in and light up a vista away off through

the woods. And then the cone-shaped cedars with their blue berries, the mantling vines, the laurels, the ferns, the moss, the dew-drops, shining brightest in the sunbeams that absorbed them, how beautiful they all were! The stream, too, was beautiful; shallow, but clear as crystal, whether sparkling in the light or embrowned with shade, it showed the white pebbles and golden sand, or multiplied the glories of waving branch or mottled sky. No wonder that the young parson was in a glee! No wonder that the two church dignitaries were two hours going those five miles! for Rev. Petit got out and walked a great deal, and took off his gloves to play with the laughing ripples and feel the velvety moss that carpeted the banks. Once for a quarter of a mile the bed of the road lay right in the channel of the stream, and when Rev. Petit noticed that the water was not even clouded by the passage of the carriage, he wanted to take off his shoes and stockings and wade as he had done when more of a boy than he was now.

But David protested. "Mr. Meagre," he said, "that water's very cold. You might catch your death, and then I'd never forgive myself."

"O, no danger, Brother Early, I take a cold bath every morning."

"But that's different, Mr. Meagre. I am afraid Mrs. Middleton will give it to me anyhow, for letting you do what you have done."

"What, David?"

"Why, look at your shirt sleeves: they're wet up to the elbows."

Sure enough, they were wet. The young parson commenced to wring them as well as he could. "Do you think," he asked, "that Mrs. Middleton will scold because I have soiled my wristbands?"

"No, indeed! she wouldn't scold if you would sile a shirt every hour in the week; but if you should get a sore throat and couldn't preach any more, what then?"

"Then I would do my best to clear you from all blame in the matter."

At length the enthusiastic parson and his smiling deacon emerged from the shady road at the foot of the mountain. It was just where the South Branch is cut by a gorge or gap. Although the sun had been up for about two hours, the mists were just rising from the valley, and touched by the beams, burnished the tree-covered sides and top of the high ridge with purple and gold. Rev. Petit just caught hold of David's arm and exclaimed, "O! O!! O!!!"

"What?" asked David, stopping the horse.

"Look at that baptism of glory."

"That's very nice, but you ought to be up on the peak a little earlier, and look down."

"That must be beautiful too," remarked the parson, "I would travel all night to have such a morning view as that."

"Up there's where Hannah's folks live," said David,

pointing with his whip to a white cot perched like an eagle's nest on some Alpine crag.

"And a beautiful place it is, too," said the parson; "this must be like Switzerland."

"The man that owns it now is from there," said David. "He bought it on that account. He's just come back from the old country and thinks he'll want it. He allows to raise grapes on the side of the hill there."

"I will be sorry if your folks are compelled to leave it," said the young parson.

"Yes," said David, "but if it must be so, we can't complain; I've partly rented a house for them in town—that little one back in Dr. Arlington's apple orchard."

"Well, that is nice, too, but not half as pretty as this. However, your friends will be nearer to the church. How are we to get up there?"

"Road winds here," said David. "There is an easier one comes up on the other side of the mountain, or else Phœbe never could have stood it to be moved."

"There is not a prettier one," said Rev. Petit, confidently.

"Have to get you to light out here, Mr. Meagre," said David, when they got near the cot. "I can't turn the wagon around if I drive up quite to the house."

Mrs. Ross, David's mother-in-law, came out to meet the young parson, and having been duly introduced, he went into the house with her. The fence and the cottage were as white as snow, and fragrant jessamines

clambered over the door and windows. Mr. Meagre noticed, as he entered the little wicket-gate, that even the stone slabs leading to the house looked as if they had been scoured.

"What a beautiful view you have here, and how white your house is," he remarked to Mrs. Ross.

"The house is very humble," she replied, "but it's clean. I often think, however poor one is, they can yet get a peck of lime."

The young parson never forgot this last remark. Within the house everything was scrupulously clean. The tall case of drawers with brass handles, the table, the chairs, all oaken, were as white as they could be made by scrubbing, and the floor was nicely sanded.

"And this," said the young parson, pleasantly, as he entered the room, "this is Phœbe."

"Yes sir," said the poor girl with a sweet, bright smile. "This is me."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

LITTLE PHŒBE, THE CRIPPLE—THE FIRST INTERVIEW.

PHŒBE ROSS was, as David Early had said, sixteen years old, and had never walked a step in her life. When the young parson entered the cot, he found her

on a hickory chair, which had evidently been made for her own especial use. It was fastened upon a platform, which rested on four low wheels, so that it could be moved about without any inconvenience to the occupant.

The poor child's enlarged head exhibited a sad case of malformation. For the rest of her physical imperfections, it is sufficient to say, that the part of the human system which we know as bone had never, in her case, become ossified, but remained soft like cartilage as in a newly-born babe. Dr. Arlington afterwards told Mr. Meagre, that the case was a most wonderful one. He had written a paper upon it for a medical society in one of the cities, and several eminent physicians had made long journeys to examine the child. For the first three years in her life she had not been able to hold up her head at all; it would just fall over on her shoulder as if her neck had been broken. How this could be without a severance of the spinal column was the mystery with the men of science.

During this period, Phœbe had been carried on a pillow, her friends scarcely expecting that she would live from one day to another. Yet while many a robust person had been cut down in the unbent strength of manhood, this poor child had lingered on through these long years. Her afflictions of course only endeared her the more to her mother, although the good woman said she had often prayed that the sufferings of her child might be relieved by death. The father,

alas ! was dissipated, and not attentive to his family, often staying away for weeks and even months at a time.

Phoebe's mind was that of a child four years old, perfectly sound, but undeveloped, and of course without the strength common to those who have attained to her age. It occurred to the young parson that if Locke's theory, that the mind is originally like a blank sheet of paper, were true, here might be an unsullied page, and he felt anxious about the first impression to be made upon it. He prayed, however, that God would write His law upon her heart. To the poor child surrounded by such bold, wild scenery, the forces of nature perhaps seemed to be themselves divine and preternatural, and although her mother had probaby spoken to her about a Personal God, and did all she could to instruct her, her knowledge was of course very limited. Here, however, was an immortal spirit, and a rational mind, and even that frail body might become a temple of the Holy Ghost, and the whole being of the little cripple sanctified and saved — made to shine at God's right hand through infinite riches of grace in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Little Phoebe gazed at the young parson with child-like interest. She seemed highly delighted that he had come to see her, and soon the two were engaged in a pleasant talk. "You can see very far from here," said Rev. Petit, pointing out of the window, "and the sky, the mountain-sides, and all the green and yellow fields are very pretty."

"My mother says, God made them," said Phœbe, "and I reckon that's the reason they look so nice."

"Yes, Phœbe, God made them, and they show us how great and good He is. I hope that you and I will be able to talk a great deal about Him, and His love for us."

"Brother David said you would talk about that when you'd come, and my mother says if we move to town, mebbe I may go to church. Theresa and Emma was often there. Them's sister Hannah's little gals: they can all both walk as good as mother; and they often was in meetin. They told me the big church-house aint got no bureau in it, and is full of benches, and all the people sets on the benches, and you go up the stair steps on the big pulpit, and the people sings and prays, and you preaches. I wish I was so as I could set on one of the benches."

"Well, Phœbe," said the young parson, deeply touched, "if you move to town, you shall go to church. David and I can carry you there on your chair before all the people come, and I will do all I can for you. You have been baptized I believe."

"Yes," said Phœbe, "My mother said Minister Huguenot baptized me, when I was little. I wasn't 'spected to live then, but my mother says it was God's will that I should live."

"Yes," said Rev. Petit, "and I want to tell you a great deal about those things. Above all I want you to know that God has promised to be your reconciled

Father, for Jesus Christ's sake. Have you ever tried to learn to read, Phoebe?"

"Yes sir, at least ways my mother and Hannah tried to learn me my a b c's, but I got the spasms, and the Doctor said it was too much for my brains and nerves; but I can look at the pictures in the big Bible book, when mother holds it for me."

"Well, never mind about learning to read. I can teach you a great deal without that, just by telling you things, even if we cannot talk much at one time. I hope to see you very often, especially if you come to town, and I think we will be first-rate friends," said the parson.

"Then I hope we will move to town then. I was in town when we moved; there was a whole heap of houses on both sides of the road," said Phoebe.

"You are to move to a town next week, but not the one you come through," said David, who had just been having a talk with Mrs. Ross outside of the house. "Mother says old Mr. Bingen was here yesterday, and says how he'd like to have his place, and I've got the refusing of Dr. Arlington's till Saturday night, and so I'll just tell him this evening that I will take it."

Phoebe smiled, and Mrs. Ross said she was almost reconciled to leave her old home again so soon, in the hope that it might be of some advantage to her poor child.

"But how am I to be moved?" asked Phoebe.

"O," said David, "I can manage that just as we

did when we brought you here: take the front seat out of the concern, and set your chair in, with you in it."

"Then, Mr. Meagre, judging from what we heard you say when we were at the door, you think you can teach Phœbe something without making her study the book," said Mrs. Ross.

"O yes. I can teach her by talking to her. You know that the command was to *preach* the gospel, and that many become savingly acquainted with the truth who never learn to read. One of the most merciful provisions of our holy religion is, that it is suited to those of the humblest capacities, and God often hides things from the wise and prudent, and reveals them unto babes!"

"I didn't know whether Phœbe had mind enough," said the poor woman, pitifully.

"Mother thought," said David, "that being as Phœbe couldn't learn to read, mebbe there wasn't foundation enough to work on, in teaching her about religion. You know there must be a sort of basis, or at least ways, I always thought so. You can't well teach a man unless he's sound-minded. But I told mother that if such was Phœbe's case, she would not be 'countable."

"You are right, David," said the parson, "but there is basis enough here for the Holy Spirit to work upon, and it is upon His agency and power that I expect to rely. We have no right to limit His work, you know, and without that, the most towering intel-

lect is insufficient. The highest truth is 'spiritually discerned. Christ is the truth, and no man can say that Jesus Christ is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.' By the way, Mrs. Ross, you pray with Phoebe?"

"Night and morning, regular," was the reply.

"And of course you pray aloud?"

"Why, yes, Mr. Meagre, to tell the truth I do, but we are here alone, and"—

"All right," said the parson, "it would be wrong for you not to do so. I asked the question because I wished to suggest to you to use the Lord's prayer at the close of your other petitions, at least, and have Phoebe repeat it after you."

"I wish it was night now, so that you could pray with us," said Phoebe.

"I can do that at any rate," said the young parson, "and I expect to do it before I leave; we ought to feel like praying at all times, Phoebe."

Phoebe smiled, and seemed to muse over this last remark. Mr. Meagre watched her countenance, and waited for her to indicate her line of thought. In a little while she broke the silence by saying: "My mother says God won't 'spect me to kneel down on my knees when I say my prayers, but mother, she always kneels down when she says her prayers."

"No, Phoebe," said Mr. Meagre, "God never asks us to do what we cannot do. Even when He tells us to love and serve Him, He helps us to do it. But even those of us who can kneel, and ought to kneel sometimes, may pray to God when we are not kneeling. I

love to pray when I am walking or riding. You and I can pray sitting here, even if our lips do not move. We can wish in our hearts that our Heavenly Father will forgive and bless us."

While this conversation was taking place, Mrs. Ross was passing in and out of the house, and it was soon apparent that she was getting dinner. This she had been cooking out in the yard at one end of the cot, under a shed made of four forked pieces of wood stuck into the ground with the prongs upward, and surmounted with cross-pieces, over which bushes were thrown. The good woman spread no cloth, nor was it necessary, for the table was so clean that it almost shone. Upon this table she placed three bright pewter platters, and deposited in the centre a dish of nicely stewed chicken. This, with the first of her crop of sweet potatoes, the last of her green corn, some Irish potatoes, some tomatoes, a loaf of brown bread, and a crock of milk, made up the fare.

"Come, Mr. Meagre, take that seat," said the good woman, "David, you can set behind the table on the bench."

"And where is Phœbe to sit?" asked the young parson, looking at the cleanly dressed child, "I will enjoy the dinner more if she eats with us."

"I thought Phœbe could wait," said Mrs. Ross, "but she can feed herself right good now, sometimes, and, if you wish it, David will draw her chair up on this side next to me."

"Well, then, get my little porringer," said Phœbe.

"Mr. Meagre, I eats bread and milk. They say that makes bones."

"Yes," said Mrs. Ross, "but the doctor says I must allow you some stronger food now, and I think you must eat a little potato and gravy to-day."

By this time, Phœbe was pulled up to the table, and a little glazed earthen vessel with handles put before her. The poor child then tried to fold her hands and assume a reverential posture until the blessing was asked. When this was done, Mrs. Ross was about to say something in regard to the humble repast, but David checked her. "You needn't 'pologize to Mr. Meagre," he said, "I'll be bound he'll enjoy this dinner as much as if it was a fashionable one among the bigbugs in Gainfield."

"You were not going to apologize for *that* dinner, were you?" asked the young parson, smiling.

Mrs. Ross acknowledged by her silence that she was, but Rev. Petit gave her a queer look, and went into such a severe knife and fork exercise, that she was at once convinced that she need not give herself any further uneasiness. Nay, when the meal was nearly over, she confessed that her clerical guest had eaten heartily. "I'd like to cook for you always," she said, "if you enjoy yourself" so much in eating. I was afraid it was too early for you, but David reckoned you had an uncommon early breakfast."

The young parson owned up that he was a very good feeder at all times, and said the dinner was not too early, as his ride and the bracing mountain air, had

given him an appetite. "But how in the world do you keep your milk so cool, Mrs. Ross?" he asked, as his hostess replenished his cup with a tin skimmer.

"Keep it in the spring," replied the woman.

"But it must tax your strength to get up and down the hill."

"O," said David, "she don't have to go to the one we passed coming up here. There is one just around the knoll, very nigh on a level with this floor."

"What, so high as this? I'll venture the opinion that you have something very pretty. Does the water run down over the rocks?"

"Yes," said David, "and you ought to see it. *You'd* think it nice."

After dinner the young parson lit a cigar and went out to look at the spring. He found it to be one of the most beautiful things he had ever beheld. The pure water bubbled up into an irregular basin in the solid rocks, and then leaped down the mountain side, forming a lovely cascade.

"Better go round on t'other side," said David, "always a rainbow there, when the sun's shining."

Mr. Meagre walked around, and sure enough, there, lying as it were against the tree tops, were all the beautiful tints that the light makes when it kisses the spray. Rev. Petit became enthusiastic, sentimental, and at last romantic. At first he was disposed to stand still and scream out of pure admiration, then he almost wept because his humble friends had to leave their beautiful home, wished that they could stay there just

that he might come to see them often, and resolved to cultivate the acquaintance of old Mr. Bingen, so that if ever he got a sweetheart he could ride up there on horseback with her. At length it occurred to him that when he got rich by preaching, he would buy the place and enlarge the cottage for a summer residence. He might build another around the hill and give it to Mrs. Ross as a permanent home, with an annuity, just for keeping things in order in the winter. Pretty idea, wasn't it? Finally the ardent young man solemnly promised himself that he would visit the place at least once every summer, and that if ever he got a congregation that could support a married man, and then succeeded in getting a wife, he would bring her to see his friends, the Middletons, and come out to that very spot on just such a day, to show Mrs. Meagre that there were some things about the mountains of America much handsomer than any she had seen while on her wedding trip to Paris.

After an hour spent at the spring, the young parson went into the cottage and had another talk, and a prayer with Phœbe and her mother, and then started home, expecting to meet his new friends again in Pumbeditha. David wanted to go around the "far way," to save his pastor a jolting, but to this Rev. Petit objected. He enjoyed the evening ride as much as he had enjoyed the one in the morning, the only difference in the beautiful things around him being that the sun shone upon them from the west instead of from the east, and gave the same picture with different

lights and shades. David occasionally made a droll remark. The only person the two excursionists met, was a man with a load of hoop-poles. One of his horses was dead lame, and the deacon thought the man would have made better progress if he had "unscrewed that old gray's right hind leg and left it at home." The young parson concluded that Sidney Smith would not have fooled *David Early* with his jokes, as the one just perpetrated was worthy of the English wit himself. Most of the time on the way was spent in the silent enjoyment of nature — itself so quiet, except that the water babbled incessantly, and the tinkle of a cow-bell was heard in the distance, mingling very prettily with the sound of the running brook.

The parson and the deacon got back to Mr. Middleton's early in the evening, greatly pleased with their trip. Rev. Petit had much to say about Mrs. Ross and Phœbe, and the splendid things he had seen during the day. David too had his yarn to tell, but with him his pastor was the central figure, and of course he talked most about Mr. Meagre.

"Was monsus interestin'," he said to Mrs. Middleton, "to see our little parson to-day. If any body'd a been out shooting preachers, they'd a never pinte'd a gun at him. Looked so child-like enjoyin' everything God had made, even down to the stones and sand in the bottom of the crick."

"He did not put on any airs then?" asked Mrs. Middleton.

"Not him," said David, "couldn't help but contrast him with Bill Bottles, that ain't got any more learnin' than I have. Rode with Bill one day, and you'd a thought he was goin' to put one foot on the North pole, and one foot on the South pole, take a tar-paddle from the East and a tar-paddle from the West, and grease the gudgeon of the universe. But they say that all the *great* men is simple-like, and I believe it now, since I know Mr. Meagre so well. Mother-in-law herself told me afore we come away, that if she'd been blind, and just heard him talking so plain-like to Phoebe, she wouldn't a believed that he was the big little preacher. But one thing did 'stonish me, Mrs. Middleton. I found out that Mr. Meagre thinks he is the worst sinner alive. Believe me or not, I cotch him a cryin' over it to day, and he did corner me up awful tight when I 'tempted to reason him out of it. Don't believe he thinks he's any higher up in grace than I am."

Dear, good, simple-hearted David Early! He did really *think* Rev. Petit was a *great* man. After the kind remarks he had made, he left a five dollar note with Mrs. Middleton for his pastor, and suggested to her that, "Bein' as Mr. Meagre had eat an early breakfast and an early dinner, it might be well enough to give him an early supper." But he could not be prevailed upon to stay himself for tea. He went to tell Dr. Arlington he would take the house, then put the saddle that he had rode on in the morning into the "Diligence," and went home to give Hannah and

the children a history of the day's proceedings. He came to town early next morning, however, to see if Mr. Meagre had cotch cold from playin' in the water ; to ask whether it was not a sin to talk the way he did about a poor old gray horse ; and 'pologize for them unchristian words he had used about Mr. Bottles.

The young parson concluded that he *was not* higher up in grace than his humble deacon.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

LITTLE PHŒBE, THE CRIPPLE—HOW WAS SHE TO BE TAUGHT?—A CALL AT DR. ARLINGTON'S.

WHEN the time for the young parson's next regular service in Pumbeditha came, he found Mrs. Ross and her afflicted daughter living in the little old stone house, with large out-side chimney, and red baton shutters, in Dr. Arlington's apple orchard. Although they had only been there about ten days, Mrs. Ross had the walls as white as those of the house she had left on the mountain. The floor too, was nicely sanded, and the sweet-brier that grew by the door, was tied up with no small degree of taste. Even the sticks and leaves had been raked and swept from under the trees, so that the matted grass was perfectly clear of anything like dirt. Phœbe had stood the journey very well, and now the air was so pure, and

the ground so dry, that she was permitted to sit in her chair in front of the door. It was here that Mr. Meagre found her. She was rejoiced to see him, but he had only time to say how glad he was to find her so well, and promised her that if the weather was clear the next day, she should go to church.

"I can see the church-house from here," said Phoebe, "and I heard the big bell ring, when a man got buried the other day, but I want to go in the church.

"Well, I hope you will be able to go to-morrow," said Mrs. Ross.

That evening the young parson went to see Dr. Arlington, and told him what an object of interest he had found in Phoebe. It was then that the Doctor told him the facts in the little cripple's history, before referred to in these chapters. "By the way," he said, "my daughter Mary here, has had her missionary zeal wonderfully fired up, since Phoebe's advent. I met her on the street the other day, with both hands full of primers, and I suppose she would have taught the child all that she knew herself by this time, if I had not stopped her."

"Now, pa," said Miss Mary, "you know she would not have been more than half through *Telemaque*, and you will acknowledge that I have read the whole of it. But, Mr. Meagre, what are you going to do with the poor little creature, if pa will not allow you to teach her to read? Is she simple-minded?"

"Her simplicity is that of a child, and not that of

an idiot," said the young parson, "and I am inclined to think it will be rather an advantage in instructing her."

"You are doubtless right in what you say, Mr. Meagre," said the old Doctor. "Have you ever noticed how confiding she is? For instance, always giving her mother or some one else as authority, and seeming to think that anything told to her must be true?"

"Yes sir," said the young parson, "and the very thing you speak of, seems to be an essential element of child-like simplicity. I have often thought that such credence and trust come about as near to the Christian's faith as anything attaching to the mind of the merely natural man can come."

"I have often thought of that, too," said the Doctor. "The 'faith' of your Testament is, of course, the work of a supernatural agency, but such unquestioning reliance as we see in Phœbe, is very nearly allied to it, especially if the confidence is in God."

"But you have not answered my question. How are you going to instruct Phœbe?" said Miss Arlington. "I ask it again, because I am wonderfully interested in the child."

"Excuse me, Miss Mary, I thought that oral instruction would be best suited to her, and I have some little appliances that I hope will help the work. Here are a number of pictures that I expect to give her," said Rev. Petit, taking two small parcels from the breast-pocket of his coat.

"I see," said Miss Mary, "that you have taken a hint from the fact that a great and good man had the truth taught to him from the tiles of the fire-place."

"I have taken the hint," said the young parson, "from the fact that Phœbe herself has been interested by the pictures in her mother's Bible. I watch such little things, and often think they are indications of Providence."

"That is a good idea," said Miss Arlington. "Don't you like it, pa?"

"Very much, my dear," said her father.

"Mr. Meagre, please let me see the picture," said Miss Mary.

"These are views of English lakes," said Rev. Petit, opening a package of purple and blue-tinted lithographs. "There is, as you see, a little book accompanying them, containing descriptions and explanations."

Miss Arlington took the cards and looked at them. "These are exquisite," she said, "but, Mr. Meagre, you do not expect Phœbe to remember, or even repeat the names, do you? It would twist the jaw of an old Scotch preacher of the times of Cromwell, to pronounce them. Here is a picture of 'Windermere, from the neighborhood of Clappersgate,' and one of 'Thirlmere, from the road to Keswick, from Ambleside,' and the book speaking of Helm Crag says: 'the view from it embraces the whole vale of Grasmere, Helvellyn, Dunmail Raise, Wansfell Pike, Saddleback, Langdale Pikes, Windermere, Esthwaite Water, and

the Coniston range.' These names may be classical, but I declare, pa, they would be about as intelligible to the child as the labels on your medicine bottles, and every one knows they are outlandish enough."

"Come, Miss Molly," said the Doctor, playfully, "many of those labels are synonymous with your botanical terms, and if you ridicule the mysteries of my profession, you expose your favorite science to attack. Mr. Meagre, I opine, has no idea of troubling Phoebe with those names. He simply wishes to please the child, or at least address her mind through her senses."

"That is all I expect to do with those views, Miss Mary," said the young parson, "they present some bold mountain scenery, such as Phoebe has been accustomed to look upon from the home she just left. I thought I would give her only one or two at a time, as more might confuse her ideas, but if ever she is able to appreciate your labors, you may teach her the hard names."

"I would sooner study the pretty pictures myself and give her my primers, as pa calls them. They too have pictures in them. But they are near at hand, and I will submit them to your inspection," said Miss Mary, reaching for the little books she had bought, and placing them in Mr. Meagre's hand.

"Now, Mr. Meagre, criticise them severely," said the Doctor, smiling.

"It is easy enough to do that, sir," said Rev. Petit. "They are what I expected to find them — books,

gotten up with especial reference to the 'morals and spelling' of young children. And they may answer the last named purpose very well, but fail in the first more essentially than the 'Views of English Lakes,' which lay no claims to morality, except so far as a refined taste may conduce to it."

"I suppose," said Miss Molly, "that your pictures are gotten up as *advertisements*. I see it stated here after a flaming description of Grasmere, that there are two inns there, the 'Red Lion,' and 'The Swan.' Travellers are recommended to stay in the vicinity several days and see the beauties of the place."

"You had better run across the water, and see if the publishers of the cards are not the proprietors of the inns," said Rev. Petit. "But here is one of your pictures, a sort of composite one—two or three in one, and described in these beautiful lines :

"The ox is fat, he cannot run,
The dog is lying in the sun,
Tom loves to run and skip and jump,
And follows Peter round the pump."

"That is a fine specimen of monosyllabic power, but I do not see how a Sunday School scholar is to learn any moral or religious truth from it? The second article to which I would invite the attention of purchasers is a Hymn book. It has the merit of containing the little gem,

"I want to be an Angel."

"And what is the objection to that?" asked Miss Arlington.

“Simply this, Miss Mary, that it expresses something contrary to and beneath what God’s Word teaches us to expect. When Christ stooped for our redemption he took not upon Him the nature of angels, but of man, and his triumphant resurrection and ascension did not consist in being changed to an angel, but in raising our *humanity* up to a state of sinless perfection. And when our life shall appear we shall be like *Him*, for we shall see Him as He is. The little hymn commences with the pagan idea of a transmigration of souls, to say the least of it, and is a libel upon human desire. The hope we have of our departed friends is that they themselves will be restored to us, and not that angels — another order of beings — will be substituted in their places. *That* would hardly satisfy us in our bereavements.”

“I see now where the fault lies,” said Miss Mary, “and a gross one it is.”

“But *here*, Doctor,” continued the young parson, “is a rare specimen of religious literature. This little red-covered book purports to be a history of a noble-hearted little girl. It has a frontispiece: A little boy has broken a plate, and his sister is represented as saying, ‘There, brother, ma told you not to touch that; but don’t cry, I’ll tell her I broke it.’ In other words, she will tell a lie and screen the guilty through false ideas of generosity.”

“That is very careless teaching,” said the Doctor.

“Yes sir,” said the young parson, “it is a good

illustration of that carelessness, which is the dry rot of the world."

"Mr. Meagre," said Miss Mary, "I begin to see why you want so many books thrown out of the Sunday School library. They are really pernicious."

"Yes, Miss, many of them are, and nearly all of them are, to say the least, mere negations. There has been such a wonderful attempt to accommodate everybody, that there is scarcely a bit of positive doctrine in them."

At this point some callers came in, and the conversation was interrupted.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

FURTHER CRITICISMS—PLEASANTRY.

WHEN the company had left, the young parson opened a small package of embossed cards representing Scripture scenes and incidents, and said, "Here, Miss Mary, are what I intended for Phoebe more especially."

"These will do better than the others," said Miss Arlington, "although they are not as finely executed as the views of English lakes,"

"There is a difference in that respect," said Rev. Petit, "and I must disarm Miss Mary's criticism by acknowledging that at least one of the pictures is not

truthful. Look at that card, and see if it does not contain a palpable anachronism. It is a representation of Hagar in the wilderness. 'I had a laugh over it, when I first saw it.'

Miss Arlington's quick eye soon discerned the error to which the young parson referred, and she broke out into a ringing laugh.

"What is it that is so funny?" asked her father.

"Why only look, pa, at the new facts of patriarchal history here disclosed. Before Ishmael laid down to die, he took off his modern broad-brimmed straw flat, and put it with his trundling hoop. I do not think the sun could have affected him with such a covering for his head, but it must have been very fatiguing to roll that hoop over those rocks. And only see Hagar," continued the gay girl, "she is bringing water to her perishing child in a vessel for all the world like our new ice-pitcher. I knew that Abraham had given her a leather bottle, but was never aware that he had given her any plate. Do, pa, put on your spectacles and see if there is an inscription on it. It is a wonder the poor bond-woman has not a cut-glass tumbler in the other hand!"

"My daughter!" exclaimed the Doctor, reprovingly, and yet unable to keep his own risibility within proper bounds.

"Well, pa," said the merry girl, "I knew you would check any seeming want of reverence, but I am not laughing at sacred things. I am amused only at the way some men imagine them to have been. Now, pa,

you cannot but laugh yourself, and Mr. Meagre has acknowledged that he had his laugh out before he came here. And besides, he led me into temptation. I do believe he brought that picture here just to upset my gravity. You know you said yourself, the first time you saw him, that he had mischief in his eye."

"Mr. Meagre knows enough of me to be assured that the remark you foolishly report was not made in the way of disparagement," said the doctor.

The young parson bowed in acquiescence, and proposed to burn the picture, lest it might give Phœbe wrong impressions of primitive simplicity; but to this Miss Arlington would not consent. She begged it for herself, and it was given to her. "I want to show it to sister Sue," she said, "and then put it among my curiosities. It is *so* ridiculous, and reminds me of the preacher who was telling his people of the war Abram waged against the kings, and described the booming of the cannon and the rattling of the musket shots, so graphically."

"Now, Mr. Meagre, the incorrigible little tease is disposed to pick at *your* profession," said the Doctor.

"And if I am, pa, the cloth will find a faithful advocate in you. I have long since concluded that you and Mr. Meagre have formed a mutual admiration society over there in the office, for you sit till midnight talking about Homer, Virgil and other heathen favorites."

"The preacher Miss Mary speaks of, Doctor," said Rev. Petit, "was not betrayed into a much greater

mistake than some of those we hear ladies make occasionally. The other night Dr. Kay and I were invited to a party. The lady of the house entered the parlor dressed in blue. She wore a blue dress, blue head-gear, blue gloves, and blue slippers. Approaching the Doctor in a most bewitching manner, and holding up her fingers to represent streaks of light, she said: 'Dr. Kay, I appear this evening in the character of Aurora. Do honestly tell me how I become it?' "

"Now, pa," said Miss Mary, "if you are not impartial, you will say that Mr. Meagre is disposed to pick at the women. But pray Mr. Meagre, what did the Doctor say?"

"He said," replied Rev. Petit, "that it was a bold and original thought for Aurora to appear at night, but that the poets had created so universal an impression that she was 'rosy fingered,' that the blue gloves might be regarded as too daring an innovation on established notions."

"No doubt Dr. Kay's refined manner took all the rough edge from the criticism, which the lady had invited by insisting on an honest opinion, but do tell me what the poor girl said?"

"The Doctor's scalpel was wreathed to the hilt with flowers, I assure you, Miss Mary. The lady said nothing. She went out, however, and pulled off the gloves, and after that looked a little more like the goddess about the tips of her digits," said the young parson.

"I think," said Miss Molly, "that she should have resolved herself into a little piece of blue sky before Aurora appeared."

"I think," said the Doctor, "that you girls ought to read our heathen favorites before you attempt such impersonations. I can call to mind just now two passages in which her rosy-fingered ladyship is spoken of. The one occurs in Ovid, the other in the Iliad of Homer," and here the old physician quoted the Greek.

"I have a general recollection of the passages to which you refer, but I could not have quoted the original text as you have done," said Rev. Petit. "But that may be accounted for, on the ground that I am separated by more years from the time that those things are generally studied than you are, Doctor. I have, however, a particular remembrance of the fact, that my ears were boxed over something of the kind, when reading the Odyssey."

"Well, all I know about her," said Miss Mary, "is that she is spoken of in the classical dictionary as a goddess, drawn in a rose-colored chariot, and opening, with her rosy fingers, the gates of the east, pouring dew upon the earth, and making the flowers grow. And I will be careful not to try to represent her in blue gloves, if Dr. Kay is about. But, pa, if you and Mr. Meagre are going to talk about Homer, I may as well withdraw, for I will not be able to get a word in edge-wise. The day that Mr. Meagre overtook us on horseback, I happened to say something about a

hippodrome, and that started you. You had some heroic verses to quote, and scanned them in such a way that the sounds were like the clatter of the horses' hoofs, although I did not know the meaning of a word you uttered. And heroic verse was the theme all the way home. How did you know, pa, but what Mr. Meagre wanted to say something particular to me along that romantic road?"

"Something very significant, I suppose, my daughter. You looked so charming that day with your white plume."

"I looked as well as Mr. Meagre did the day he rode the colt, pa."

"And pray where was Miss Arlington, that she saw me on that celebrated equestrian tour?" asked the young parson.

"Behind the Venitian blinds," said the Doctor.

"And not laughing the less heartily because Mr. Meagre could not help laughing at himself," said Miss Mary.

"I was fully aware of the figure I cut that day, especially on my way back, and did not blame any one for making merry over it," said the young parson. "Did I remind you of a Centaur?"

"You were as little like a Centaur that day, as Dr. Kay's friend was like Aurora, but I am afraid of starting pa again, and then, as I before intimated, you might as well bow me out of the room."

"I did not pretend to be a Centaur that day, or any part of one, or perhaps I would have clung more

tightly to the other half of myself. But you need not fear that any more classic lore will be inflicted upon you to-night, as the little monitor on your mantel admonishes me that I ought to bow *myself* out," said the young parson, rising to go. "By the way Miss Mary, if you can do anything for Phœbe, I will regard it as a favor."

"I will be glad to do all I can for her, but I distrust my judgment in dealing with one whose being is so delicately strung. I never realized before how complex man's nature is. What a wonderful sympathy there is between mind and body! What a dependency of parts! I have to ask pa every day what Phœbe may eat for her dinner, and I suppose I will have to ask you how I am to instruct her."

"Neither of us may have as much difficulty as we imagine, if we only ask for the Divine guidance and blessing," said Mr. Meagre.

"I feel the need of that very much," said Miss Arlington, as the young parson bade her and her father good night.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

PHŒBE AT CHURCH—TRIPLE ALLIANCE.

SUNDAY morning came, and a beautiful September morning it was — clear, warm, and dry — just such a day as Dr. Arlington hoped it would be, that Phœbe might go to church. David Early drove up to Mr. Middleton's door, with his family in the "Diligence," just as the first bell was ringing.

"Good morning, Mr. Meagre and Mr. Middleton," he said, "thought I'd drive round to mother-in-law's and leave Hannah and the children out, and then take Phœbe to church in the 'Concern.'"

"I'll go with you and help to lift her," said the young parson.

Mr. Middleton offered to send his man, Sam, but Mr. Meagre remembered that he had promised the little girl that he would do it himself, and thought it important to be as good as his word. He accordingly went, and found Phœbe dressed in a clean calico frock, and long white apron, waiting.

"Good morning, Phœbe," he said, "you are to go to church now."

"Yes sir," said the little cripple. "My mother said last night it 'pended on if God would smile on my goin'. And when I got awake and seed the sun

a shinin' through the trees, then I know'd that God was a smilin' then; and then I called my mother to put on my new warm socks she made out of list, and get me ready."

"I hope that God will smile upon you always," said the young parson, as he helped to lift the child into the carriage.

David drove around to the church, and Phœbe was carried, or rather hauled, in her chair to the little front aisle that separates the left row of side pews from those that face the chancel. Here she was measurably screened from observation, and yet could see nearly all over the house.

The church was not a very modern one. It was built at a time when a prominent place was given to the altar, and the large square one placed here, and covered with a black cloth with tassels, had not, thanks to a succession of churchly ministers, been superseded by a mahogany pier-table. The pulpit was semi-circular in shape, and trimmed with dark velvet. There were galleries on three sides of the house, and the stoves, with such an extension of pipe as to require wire supports, were always left standing in the midst of the straight-backed pews. All this seemed very grand to Phœbe. The size of the house was itself a wonder, and everything in it was new. Mrs. Ross, Mrs. Early and her children, soon came in and seated themselves near their afflicted relative, and Rev. Petit withdrew, leaving her to make her first simple remarks to them. Soon the people began to assemble and

silently take their places in the pews, and when the last bell was done ringing the house was nearly full. Then the service commenced at the altar. Mr. Steele, who usually "raised the tune," was not there that morning, and Miss Mary Arlington led the singing, in which the whole congregation joined. After the service at the altar, Mr. Meagre preached a sermon on the text, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Then there was another prayer, a hymn with a doxology, and the benediction, after which the congregation quietly dispersed. In all of this, the poor child seemed to be greatly interested.

Perhaps comparatively few of the congregation knew that Phoebe was in the church, for, as said before, she was almost hidden from view. And those that did know she was there had common sense enough not to show any morbid curiosity to see her. To this, however, there was one exception. As soon as the service was over, Mrs. Pugnose crowded to the front of the house with all the indecent haste exhibited by rude people when they want to see a corpse. She carried aloft her year-old child, dressed in a canary-colored calico slip, and a red calico sun-bonnet trimmed with black ribbon, and after gazing at the little cripple with the most ineffable disdain, shook her child and pointed to the deformed girl, as if she was anxious to make it take notice of her. Phoebe did not know enough of the world to feel this much, but Mrs. Ross and Hannah were wounded by it.

As a compensation for this, Dr. Arlington and his daughter, Mr. and Mrs. Middleton, and several other persons of refinement, spoke kindly to the family group, and expressed their joy at seeing Phoebe at church. They did this in the most delicate manner, taking care not to crowd around the child and embarrass her friends by giving an unpleasant notoriety to her presence.

Mrs. Pugnose soon withdrew, and hastened to join Tom Jefferson and Mrs. Spotters, who had preceded her out of the church, and to whom she reported that "Meagre had another one of them thar prodigies. He is alers vilatin' the Scriptur's," she said, "by goin' to the highways and hedges, an' compelin' 'em to come in like the Jews in the time of Genesis. Seems like the lower people is, the more he takes notis of 'em; an' Arlin'tons, an' Middletons, an' all them, jist encourages him in it. Them people alers speak kind, an' if a body's sick they'll do a good deal for 'em; but they never thinks of callin', sociable like, to spend the day, and talk 'bout what people ses and is a doin' in town. There's Doctor Arlin'ton's darter, they say, takes that little decripit thing her dinner ev'ry day, an' she's never fotch me nary thing since she fotch me the briled pidgin an' wine whey, when I was so sick; an' yit we's got a farm, an' got more right to be notic'd than poor cripples."

"Yes," said Tom Jefferson, "it's curus to see how som people acts. I'se never been dewited to enny of them folks'es parties and dinners. An' yit it stands

to reason from my wery name, that my illustus progeny diskivered this country an' writ the constitoo-shun of Ameriky. Everybody as reads his g'ography knows vat the name of Thomas Jefferson did. An' the werry idee our family had in wiew, vus to make us all ekals. But la! body'd think ve all fit an' bled an' died fur nothin', if ve look at these degenerated times!"

"Often notis'd them things you two is a speakin' about," said Mrs. Spotters, "but la me, Miss Pugnose, I didn't know Hanner Arly's dwarf sister was in meetin', or I'd a waited to a seed her. One thing I did notis, though: old Mink Mongrel and Madge wus thar, setting jist like two penitences. Believe me or not, they wus on the very hindmostest seat agin the wall, like's if they felt they wussent worthy to be there 'mong 'spectable people, an' Meagre took pertic'ler pains to go round an' speak to 'em. Said he wus glad to see 'em, and hoped they'd come reg'lar."

"O thar's no use talkin', ladis," said Mr. Jefferson. "Ev'ry body knows Meagre is vonderful give over to them things. His whole sarmont this mornin' show'd it. Seem'd as if he couldn't be arnest an' plain enuf in tellin' people vat God's grace meant, and who't vus 'tended fur. And who vus it 'tended fur, ladis? Jist them werry vuns as felt as they had burdens on 'em as they couldn't carry themselves."

"Well, goodness knows," said Mrs. Spotters, "I can get along *myself*, and don't owe no thanks to nobody; but Meagre didn't crowd through to make a

fuss over me, an' there wussent a more respectableer drest person there. But it seems 'taint no use to git a white satin bonnet with a plume in it, for nothing ain't 'preciated in *this* place. There's Mary Arlin'ton, rich as she is, never had a plume, 'cept in that ridin' hat, an' I b'lieve she got that to please her father. She's alers with him so much, an' she hasn't wore nothin' but a plain straw with a little white ribbon on it, all summer. I axed her 'bout it one day, right to her face, when I got mine. Ses I, 'why don't you get a white satin bonnet with a feather — they're *so* fashionable.' 'O,' ses she, 'my tastes is very simple, an' it will be more gratifyin' to spend that money in some other way.' But if she'd save some that she spends on cripples, she could git a plume too. It's all the way people *manages*, as I tell Spotters. 'Speck if the truth's know'd, Mary Arlin'ton don't think my bonnet's in season. But I don't care. One thing's certain — I ain't goin' to take notis of ev'ry body.'

Mr. Jefferson and Mrs. Pugnose said that they, too, had come to some such conclusion, and after this remarkable coincidence of great minds, the trio separated.

CHAPTER XL.

ANOTHER CONVERSATION.

WHILE these three representatives of Christian charity and intelligence were uttering their criticisms, and unconsciously paying the highest compliment to the young parson's official work, that functionary of the church had helped David to take the little invalid home. And then another conversation took place. This was one in which Rev. Petit was engaged, not with Phœbe, indeed, for it was thought that she had been subjected to as much excitement as her delicate nerves could bear in one day — but with the worthy Deacon.

When Rev. Petit left the house, David followed him out of the door, and said, "Hold on, Mr. Meagre, I'll just take you round to Mr. Middleton's in the 'Concern.'"

"No, I thank you, Brother Early," said the young parson; "I would sooner walk, but perhaps the old 'Diligence' has done the best work to-day it ever did."

"Mebbe," said David, "but that is sayin' a good deal. It has run around right sharp in times past, bringin' the old and sickly to church when it rained on communion days. Often thought it one of the best

jobs it ever did, was takin' old Mr. Mongrel home the day he come so nigh gettin' on a spree."

"I suppose the old thing will be missed greatly in town," said Rev. Petit.

"O, no," replied David. "Them nice black wheels of Mr. Middleton's new 'Concern' won't be spared if it's muddy when old Mrs. White or any of them wants to come to meetin'. But say, Mr. Meagre: don't what Mr. Middleton does in that way come under the head of honoring the Lord with your substance?"

"Certainly," said Mr. Meagre. "It is using what a man has in God's service, and with a view to his glory."

"Thought so," said David.

"I think, Brother David," said Rev. Petit, "that you begin to see how a Sunday School book might be written about the old 'Diligence,' or the 'Concern,' as you are pleased to call it. If I were to undertake the work, I would follow the line of thought you have just indicated. We are too apt to abstract our religious life from the constitution of the world in which we live, and we fail to see how the way we use anything we have may tell in the eternal world. The rod of Moses was a mere staff in a man's hand, but used as God directed, it became a mighty instrumentality. And so it may be with anything, although what we call the miracle may be neither apparent nor necessary."

"Fact," said David. "When a body thinks right, we are all saved in the same way, that is, through the

blessed Saviour. Even the prophets have salvation through Messias, and we, too, are saved in Him. The Holy Spirit works the Redeemer's life in all, and the only difference is in circumstances and instruments. Them's only outward, and may vary. And if a man's brought to church in the old 'Concern,' and learns to know God aright and gets to heaven, I 'spose in t'other world, it wouldn't make much difference to him if it was that, or a chariot of fire. One might a been God's instrument as well as t'other, and his ends of glory'd a been brought about the same."

The young parson smiled at David's earnestness, and nodded assent to his arguments. "Yes, brother Early," he said, "and this we know, that the judgment is to refer to this life, for we are to be judged according to the deeds done in the body, and that will doubtless involve our relations to one another, and to all our surroundings, so that not only persons but *things* will be brought into view in determining our rewards and punishments. It is in this way that a man's wealth, in whatever form it may be, will be brought up as a talent, and so it becomes us to lay all that we are and *have* upon the altar of the Most High. A man may eat and drink, and sow and reap, to the glory of God."

"Yes, I know that, 'specially since you preached that sermont about Holiness to the Lord bein' on the bells of the horses," said David. "And one thing's certain; the old 'Concern' shan't fall off in doin' good 'cause I got it. Will try and see if there aint some

old and weakly person that I can still bring along to meetin', and I think I'll come arly, 'specially in bad weather, to help haul up some of the folks that couldn't come otherwise. You know you said anyhow, when we was ordained to office, that the deacons must not only take up the pennies, but see after the poor."

"That is all well, David," said Rev. Petit, "and if you ask God in faith, He will bless all your work."

"That," said David, "puts me in mind of another thing — how *unbelieving* men is. Was thinkin' about it to-day. Here God tells us the way of salvation is opened complete, and everybody's invited to come. He says He would not that any should perish, but that all should turn to Him and live. He especially invites them that's needy, and says He won't cast anybody out. And yet we bring little sister-in-law to church like as if it was an *experiment*. It's just like as if we was anxious to have the child blessed and saved, but thought it depended on whether the Great Father was in the humor or not. Now, Mr. Meagre, that aint just to the Heavenly Parent's character, and it don't show faith in Him. He aint slack concerning His promise, and we ought to come to Him looking for a blessing as a certainty. I think when we ain't answered, it is 'cause we don't expect anything, or in other words, 'cause we don't believe."

"You are unquestionably right in what you say, Brother Early," said Mr. Meagre. "When the blind men called to our Divine Redeemer for mercy, He

said to them, 'According to your faith be it unto you!' He invites us to draw at pleasure upon His fulness, and says the degree of our faith is to determine the measure of the blessing we receive. We often think we would like to have more grace, but we can just get as much as we want. And David, while God stoops to hear the sigh of the humblest penitent, and tells us that faith, as a grain of mustard seed, will remove mountains, he yet loves *heroic* souls. Those who come to him with importunate prayer and strong faith are always commended in the Bible."

"Like old Jacob, who wouldn't let him go till He blessed him," said David.

"That is an instance, David," said the young parson. "God said to Jacob, 'Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.'"

"And it don't seem to make much difference whether a body prays for themselves or somebody else," said the good deacon.

"No," said Mr. Meagre. "The Syrophenician woman that persevered in the midst of so many seeming discouragements, and wrung a 'yea,' from the Saviour's apparent 'nay,' came in behalf of her tormented and absent child."

"Well, Mr. Meagre," said David, "them things ought to teach us encouragement. This talk is as good as a sermon; and all I got to say is, me and Hannah and mother-in-law will all be Aarons and

Hurs to hold up your hands in the good work you've undertook, for we all do love Phœbe, and want her to be happy in the love of God."

CHAPTER XLI.

PHŒBE LEARNING.

AFTER this, Phœbe got to church very frequently. There were, during the winter that followed, a remarkable number of pleasant Sundays — scarcely an inclement one until Christmas, and after that, clear, bright weather two-thirds of the time. This was, of course, favorable to the little girl's attendance upon the public worship of the sanctuary, and soon her presence there ceased to be a subject of remark. Like many a poor deformed one, she was looked upon as a member of the community seen too often to be an object of interest to many, or of especial curiosity to any. David was always at hand to take his little "sister-in-law" to and from the house of God, and seemed to be greatly rejoiced that she was able "to tend so often without any great inconvenience or suffering to herself." The good old doctor, too, was agreeably surprised to find that all this appeared to be a benefit, rather than an injury, to his little patient's delicate frame; and he was not afraid to say that the

blessing of God had much to do with it, lest he might be thought superstitious, or be regarded as acknowledging a higher and more efficient power than could be found in man's medical skill.

And the young parson found cause for joy in the fact that God was working his purposes of salvation in the heart of his little parishioner. Indeed, his own expectations were so far exceeded, as to make him ashamed of his first unbelief.

Nor was he long in finding out that he had underrated Mrs. Ross. Though illiterate, she was an intelligent Christian woman who had long studied her Bible in the light of God's Spirit, and reduced to practice what she read. Standing herself in living communion with the church, she had *not* been content, as he at first supposed, to tell her child of a Personal Deity—the Author of all the sublime things in nature—but had spoken of Him as revealed in Christ for the redemption of the world. She had brought Phoebe to Him in faith, according to his own appointment, and told her of what she might expect from Him who had included children with their parents in the provisions and promises of His grace in Christ Jesus, our Lord. These duties rightly performed, of course the Divine fidelity was illustrated. The Holy Spirit had crowned the consecration and all the work of nurture, so that the first buddings of the “plant of grace” had been secured; and her pastor had only to develope it, by appropriate cultivation, to a “tree of righteousness

filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are, by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God."

And the young parson had far less trouble in teaching Phœbe than he expected to have. It was a great matter that she had to *unlearn* so little, and her extreme docility made it a comparatively easy matter to instil positive truth into her mind. As her body became stronger, her intellectual powers improved, and appeared at times to be very bright. Her language was idiomatic, and the little preacher was not only astonished at her theology, but delighted with the spirit of that poetry which breathed through her expressions. For although she never learned to quote Scripture accurately, except by hearing familiar passages repeated frequently, she had a wonderful way of paraphrasing it, that convinced every one that she understood much that was read to her. Indeed, she reproduced everything in a way that made it appear original, and suggested the idea that she knew the truth by a sort of heavenly intuition.

About three months after this interesting family had moved into the village, Rev. Petit was astonished to find, in a conversation with Phœbe, that notwithstanding the novelty of attending church, she had carried away a clear conception of the first sermon she had ever heard. She had as good an idea of what was said that day, as Mr. Jefferson himself.

"I know what you preached, Mr. Meagre," she said. "God said in his book, in His holy Bible, that you should tell all the people that if enny of 'em was

tired or had troubles or sufferin', the blessed Jesus 'd bear the load for 'em. Troubles and sufferin's—they comes from sin—and the blessed Jesus takes all our sins away and gives us all rest. There's where I 'spects rest."

Shortly after this, the youthful pastor found that his little parishioner could already recite the Lord's prayer, although it was hard for her always to preserve the order of the petitions. She had repeated it after her mother until it had, as it were, dropped into her mind without any special mental effort. When she told Mr. Meagre that she "most know'd it," this question arose in his mind: Can that prayer of prayers be a mere form of words to the child? He resolved to find out if possible, and yet he hardly knew how to attempt it. At length he said, "'Our Father who art in heaven,' what does that mean, Phœbe?"

Phœbe gave her reverend questioner a look in which he thought he read some confusion. He soon found out, however, that the look was expressive of surprise that such a question should be asked. It perhaps raised the first doubt she had on the subject, but she said, "'Spect it means that."

"Means what?" asked Rev. Petit.

"Why means what it *says*—that God is Our Father who art in heaven. 'Spect it's like if a body's father on earth had no faults, and was high up as God, and could love as much, and do everything like God," replied Phœbe.

"That is right, my dear," said Rev. Petit, inwardly

acknowledging that the teacher had been taught ; for that natural illustration of God's relation to us, had never occurred to him.

"God's our Father, 'cause the Saviour become'd our oldest brother. I prays to our Father, Mr. Meagre," said the little girl. "I prays to him to forgive and bless me for Christ's sake, and for the Holy Ghost to work what I ask, in me. Them Three's One, Mr. Meagre. Three's One and One's three. We *believes* that in church before you preaches, pertick'ler the last time."

"The Lord's name be praised !" exclaimed the young parson.

Why should he not exclaim, when Christ Himself had said, "I thank thee, O Father, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes ?" Here this child had a right conception of the Holy Trinity. Her faith was leaning on the simple assertion of it. Not for the world, would Mr. Meagre have gone behind that and tried to *explain* anything about it. He had come very near attempting something of the kind the Sunday before. He had even written a sermon about the eternal generation and eternal procession, but something told him to put it aside and use the Athanasian creed that morning instead of the Apostles, for although he loved the last of these symbols best, and generally used it, the former was more intensive, and might be employed with advantage at times ! He now understood the voice, and was glad that he had obeyed it.

“Mr. Meagre, I prays, ‘Thy kingdom come,’” said Phœbe, all unconscious that her previous remark had given rise to a thought in her pastor’s mind. “That means for Him to rule in my heart, and in my mother’s heart, and in my poor papa’s heart, and in everybody’s heart. I prays that. Leastways I sits in my chair and wishes it to God, and feels sure in my heart, by the Spirit, that it will be so. And ‘Thy will be done’ — that’s in the prayer too.”

“What does that mean, Phœbe?” asked Rev. Petit.

“Why,” replied Phœbe, “’spect it means if a body’s a cripple so they can’t move by themselves, they mussent complain. That’s the hardest to pray, Mr. Meagre, but I does pray it more’n the other things; and I can pray it now better than I could. ’Spect that’s ’cause the kingdom’s comin’ in me.”

Yes! that was the meaning of *that* petition to Phœbe Ross. The poor child did not remember any more of the prayer just then, and Mr. Meagre did not refresh her memory, for he saw that her nervous system was becoming excited, and he felt a little tearful himself. Besides, he thought that Phœbe had *taught him enough* for one day. So he left her with her mother and went out to think about his lesson, promising to return after she had been refreshed by a little sleep, and offer up the prayer with her without requiring her to furnish him with a commentary upon it.

The young parson had one regret after this visit. One of his professional brethren had allowed his prejudice against forms of prayer to go so far as to set

down the one that Christ Himself had given, as a Jewish document. His argument was that the name of Christ was not mentioned in it as it *should have been* if intended for the Christian dispensation. Had that brother been in attendance upon the little Seminary in Doctor Arlington's apple orchard that afternoon, he might have learned in Whom alone men are enabled to say, "*Our Father which art in heaven.*"

CHAPTER XLII.

PHŒBE AS A CHRISTIAN.

MR. MEAGRE became more and more convinced every day, that Mrs. Ross was not mistaken in the hope that she had of her child. The Saviour himself has given the test by which that was to be determined. "By their fruits shall ye know them."

Phœbe unquestionably grew up a Christian without remembering any special moment or set of conscious exercises by which she became a child of God. The thought never seemed to cross her mind of being anything else than all for God. All her talk implied that she regarded her relation to God as a *filial* one, and her habit of finding analogies between her natural and spiritual life, gave proof that she apprehended religion as a life. The dear child never had any of those deep convictions of sin that seem to mark the

experience of some people. This was not to be wondered at. Her life had never been characterized by an outward departure into flagrant wickedness. She, perhaps, did not fully know what was meant by some of the sins mentioned in the decalogue. Her mother had spoken less to her of the terrors of Sinai, than of the love of Calvary, and she had "not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, not unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest," but "to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel."

A man who professed that he had seen the lurid glare of the pit, and thought that every person must have the same experience, once made it his duty to call upon the poor child in order that he might see that "all was right with her soul." Mr. Bench seated himself before Phœbe, and with a most woe-begotten countenance, asked, "'D'you feel y'or a nawful sinner-r-r?"

"No sir," replied the unsophisticated little girl. "I don't feels it, but I *knows* it. Never suffer'd like my mother 'bout it, but that don't make no difference. I don't feel no pains when once the spasm's on me fair, and yit I'm nighest to death then. Body can be in danger without feelin' it. Body needn't wait for that, but just be 'bedient with joy like, to get safe when the way's pinte out. Christ—He's the way. He's my *righteousness*, Mr. Bench."

But if Phœbe Ross had no very pungent convic-

tions of sin, she was wonderfully impressed with a sense of God's holiness. That was to her ineffable. A remark that she once made about this, won for her the title of "the little theologian," although she never knew she went by that name, and would not have understood the term if she had been told of it. Speaking of God's peerless holiness, she said: "It's brighter than the light when the sun's shinin' in your face. No body couldn't look at it, only a veil was put on it. That was Christ's flesh, Mr. Meagre. He cover'd the glory up, and bring'd it to us when He was born'd into the world. And when the Holy Spirit gives us what's good from Him, then we can be tooked right up to where God is and see His glory without bein' killed by it. We'll joy in it."

Yes, to Phœbe, Christ was indeed the incarnation of all the glorious perfections of Deity, and to His image she strove to be conformed. There was about her, a constant yearning for this one thing, and to this she seemed to be helped by a supernatural promptitude. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."

After her confirmation, this desire to be conformed to the image of Christ, to be filled with the fulness of God, breathed through her life more than ever. And she was permitted in some measure to antedate her destiny. She found peace in believing, and her faith increased more and more. There was to her a sensible sweetness in prayer, a joy in the sacraments, and at last even a holy relish for the sufferings God

called upon her to endure. She grew in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. All the peaceable fruits of the Spirit adorned her life, and she exhibited a holiness of character which even wicked people looked upon with profound reverence.

With this holiness of character, there came an enlightenment of mind. "I am the light of the world," says Christ: "he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life abiding in Him." "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." "Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord." "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

Phoebe was always ready to give a reason for the hope that was in her, and yet she never attempted to understand the mysterious workings of grace in her soul. In the latter part of the young parson's intercourse with her, he felt more safe in asking her questions in regard to this. When he did so, it was always with the expectation that he would *learn something from* rather than *teach anything to her*. As intimated before, she made use of analogy a good deal.

"It's glorious that I was born'd into the world," she once said, "else I couldn't a lived forever; but it is best of all that I was born'd over again of the water and the Spirit, like our blessed Saviour said to the ruler that come to him at night, else my livin' forever wouldn't a been with the Lord."

“How could you be born again, and yet not know it?” asked Rev. Petit.

“Don’t know *how*. It’s like the wind, nobody don’t know where it comes from, or where it goes to,” answered the child.

“But Phœbe, I did not mean to ask about *the way in which* it was done. I rather meant to ask whether you could be a child of God, and yet not know it at the very time.”

“Yes, sir,” she replied, “it was a good while afore I know’d I was my mother’s own child, but I was her child anyhow.”

Once, too, when she professed to have been strengthened by the sacrament, the young parson asked her how that could be — how she knew that she was made strong in her heart by the communion.

“Don’t know *how*,” she answered. “Don’t know how bread and milk makes bones; but I eats bread and milk, and the bones is comin’. See! I can hold the little pictures myself now. ’Spec its the same way in the blessed sacrament. The Spirit ’plies it to me like natur’ ’plies what I eats nateral to my body.”

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE PICTURES—PHŒBE'S SUGGESTIONS.

THERE were some very pleasant little episodes in the history of Rev. Petit's pastoral care of Phœbe. One of them may be given to show that, notwithstanding the child's helplessness and sufferings, she enjoyed some things in life.

Once the young parson came from Gainfield to Pumbeditha, "atween times," as Phœbe called it. He had only a few hours to stay, and of course could not go around and see all the members, as he was wont to do when he remained several days. As no one else in the congregation was sick, he determined to discriminate in Phœbe's favor, and spend the little time he had with her. Mrs. Middleton went with him to the cottage to enjoy the child's glad surprise. Whilst they were talking to her, there was a gentle tap at the door, and without waiting for any one to open it, Miss Mary Arlington entered. She was dressed in simple white muslin, and wore a thin white sun-bonnet, with a cape that extended down to her waist. She had "just brought some farina that pa said his little patient might eat." Miss Molly was astonished at finding her reverend friend there, but instead of "taking on" in such a way as to convince any one

that she was either pleased or embarrassed by his presence, she approached him and frankly extended her hand, which Rev. Petit shook cordially. When their customary salutations were over, the parties stood before Phœbe, talking to her as the object of interest that had brought them both there. Presently the little girl's eyes brightened as if some pleasant thought had struck her.

"What is it, Phœbe?" asked Rev. Petit.

"Why, Mr. Meagre, you and Miss Mary ought to git married."

Phœbe's proposition raised a great laugh, in which she joined as heartily as any one. Rev. Petit and Miss Molly both blushed, as Mrs. Ross said, and each one avowed that their little friend was trying to get the other into a scrape.

"Well!" said Phœbe, "one's all dres't black, and one's all dres't white, like in the picture Emma and Theresa bring'd from brother David's to show me, and them two standin' up in the picture was gettin' married. The lady had a white thing on her head, most like Miss Molly's bonnet, and they was all both jinin' hands like you two was."

"Ah! yes, Phœbe, but that gentleman loved the lady. You will have to get Mr. Meagre to love me, and say all kinds of nice things," said Miss Molly, casting a pleasant look at Mrs. Middleton.

"Well," said Phœbe, "very last time he was here, he was sittin' right side of me showin' me somethin', and I was feelin' his nice black sleeves, cause they

was so soft to my fingers, and when I tell'd him how good you was to read and 'splain things and talk so kind like, then he said you *was sweet*, then."

This announcement gave rise to increased merriment. The young parson acknowledged that he had said some such thing, but did not expect it would ever reach Miss Mary's ear. Miss Mary had no doubt of the truth of Phœbe's report, and said that Mr. Meagre had paid a tribute to her amiability that had long been unjustly withheld. She thought she had better refer the young gentleman to her pa.

"He'll be glad, cause why, he tell'd my mother Mr. Meagre quite winned his heart," exclaimed Phœbe.

"No inexorable parent to contend with," said the young parson, repeating Miss Molly's signal to Mrs. Middleton.

"But, Phœbe," said Miss Mary, "Mr. Meagre will have to win *my* heart, or else pa won't give me to him. What pa said won't do; you will have to find something that *I* said."

Phœbe became greatly excited at this challenge. She tried to clap her hands in advance, but, poor child, her fingers became dreadfully tangled. Miss Molly kindly unloosed them. "There, now, my dear," she soothingly said when she was done, "be calm, or you might make yourself sick. Just speak slowly, and you may tell the company the sweetest thing you ever heard me say about Mr. Meagre."

"Well, wait till I rest's," said Phœbe, drawing a long breath.

Mrs. Middleton suggested that Mrs. Ross should give the child a little sugar to allay a hiccough. At length the little girl having regained her composure, "announced that Miss Molly said that Mr. Meagre was worth catching."

Miss Mary had forgotten that she had expressed such an opinion, but remembered it now that her little friend had reminded her of it. Mr. Meagre said he had long been of that opinion himself, and the only wonder he had was, that no one had ever tried to catch him.

Dear, dear little Phœbe! What fun that talk was to her! And how nearly it came making her sick! She was the first one of Mr. Meagre's members that had approached him directly on that subject. But both he and his fair friend looked upon the little girl as if to say, that *she* might claim any privilege, especially before such an audience as that.

Mrs. Middleton often laughed at Phœbe's child-like betrayal. Once or twice she told him if he wanted to regale himself, he had better go down to the doctor's and talk about the Greek poets. And no one knew but that the young parson had some desire to put himself in such a relation to Miss Arlington as would justify him in taking a horse-back ride with her to the mountain top. But Miss Molly had a gentleman friend, who came from a distance to see her about that time. When he went away, the young lady had one

more ring on her finger than she had when he came, and so ———

The little incident just related showed that little Phœbe could catch an idea from a picture. Indeed, she had learned a great deal in this way. The "Views of English lakes" had pleased her highly, although no one ever attempted to teach her the hard names. The Scripture scenes had been a means of interest and profitable instruction to her, although some one did say, that Meagre was teaching Ross's dwarf child to be a Catholic.

The little girl's aptitude to learn in this way encouraged the young parson to bring from the walls of his room in Gainfield a fine, large engraving of one of Ary Scheffer's pieces. The remarks made by Phœbe about this picture may serve to show what kind of lessons she sometimes learned in this way. Rev. Petit held it by the gilt frame before his little pupil, and she gazed at it intently. Presently she pointed to the central figure, and said: "That's our blessed Saviour; He must have been a pretty man. He was God, too, and had no sin about Him, and that's the reason He was such a pretty man." Then pointing to a figure of an impotent one lying at the Saviour's feet, she said excitedly: "There's a cripple just-like me. The blessed Redeemer is just goin' to raise him up, and make him straight and pretty like Himself. That's what He's goin' to do for me, too. You know, Mr. Meagre, you told in a sarмонт, what Christ did for poor cripples when he was on the earth,

just show'd what he was goin' to do for all them that's cripples. That's what I groans for — the redemption of my body. That'll be 'complished when I rises at the last day. Then I'll rise in His likeness; then I won't be a poor cripple then like that one layin' there, but be perfect like my Saviour standing there."

These remarks confirmed the young parson in an opinion that he had long entertained in regard to Phœbe's idea of some things. There was not a trace of Gnosticism about her. Although she knew that Christ was God, His incarnation was to her mind a real historical fact. He had fairly assumed our humanity, and in His own person was the realization of *perfect* humanity. Yes, yes, little Phœbe was right; the physical organization of the sinless One must have been *beautiful*. And then, too, this same perfection was to be actualized in the person of every one of God's dear children. How many professed theologians fail to conceive of redemption as such a glorious reality.

CHAPTER XLIV.

DIVINE GRACE ILLUSTRATED.

AMONG the things that troubled Phœbe most was the fact that she was not able to perform any active duties. For although she knew that it was a want of ability with her, rather than of disposition, and that

she would not be held accountable for her weak physical condition, it would have been a gratification to her to have done some little work that might have redounded to the glory of her Blessed Master. There seemed to be a constraining love for Christ at the root of this feeling. The young parson told her one day of a little blind girl who wove baskets, and thanked God that she was blind, because she did not need candles to work by, and could give the money other people had to spend for them to the Saviour's cause. This anecdote was told with the simple view of showing Phœbe how the pious soul could extract sacred sweets from the bitter ills of life. But it set the poor child to thinking, and she became sad when she remembered that she could not weave baskets, and that her fingers were too weak to allow her even to knit. She seemed to have a strong feeling on her mind that while she was receiving so much from God, *he wanted something particular from her.*

Not long after this, she asked her pastor if God could speak to people in dreams now, "like in old times when the Holy Bible was writ."

"Yes, Phœbe," said Mr. Meagre, "God *can* do it, and He perhaps *does* teach people in that way, at times. Men have lived since the Bible was written who have been brought to think of God, and what they owed to Him, by means of dreams. But why do you ask, Phœbe? Have you had a dream?"

"Don't know, sir," replied Phœbe, "mebbe you read it to me — you, else Miss Mary, or some of you

ones: cause why, when I gets the spasms I forgets things, and then when they comes back to me, I don't know how I larnt 'em."

"What was the dream, Phœbe? Tell me, and then may be I will know whether I have ever read anything like it to you," said the young parson.

"Was about the Great Master Builder," said little Phœbe.

"I do not remember that I ever read about anything like that to you, but may be Miss Mary Arlington or Mrs. Middleton did," said Rev. Petit. "But do tell me about it."

"Well," commenced Phœbe, "when my mother put me to bed, I 'magin'd I was out in the big woods, and the Great Master Builder was a goin' to build a big grand temple for His glory to shine in; and He took the trees to build the grand temple with 'em; and there was a whole heap of nice big straight trees there, but He wanted to put one little crooked one in, and He had to cut and bend it a whole heap before it would do to go in the grand temple the Master Builder was a building for His glory to shine in. Now, Mr. Meagre, wasn't that little crooked stick *me*?"

"God bless you, my dear child," said the young parson, fervently. "It makes no difference whether you dreamed that, or whether it was read to you. This I know, that God intended to teach you that your sufferings are intended for your good and for His glory. The Bible teaches you the same thing."

The young parson then quoted a number of passa-

ges bearing on the point, and they seemed to make a deep impression on the little girl's mind. Some of those same Scriptures had been repeated in her hearing before, but she had not seen the force of them as she appeared to see it now.

"Mr. Meagre," she said, "'Spec the way I comed to dream that was, my mother was a washin', and I was all by myself; and I was a thinkin' 'bout the woods where we used to live when you fust comed' to see me, and how as God made the woods. And I 'membered a little crooked tree up there, and how as God made that too, and didn't make it for nuthin'. And then I was a thinkin' 'bout what mother read in the Bible book 'bout God's buildin', only that was made of livin' stones—them's people, Mr. Meagre, and the blessed Jesus is chiefest 'mong 'em all. He's God as well as man, and that's the reason He's chiefest 'mong 'em all, and all the people 'pends on him for a foundation like. If it wussent for Him, none of the people'd be livin' and no glory'd shine in 'em. Well, I was thinkin' 'bout the woods and the temple—them two things, and at night when I said my prayers and asked God to make me a livin' stone, I goed to sleep and 'spect I got them two things all both 'fused in my mind."

How true that dreams are the mental patchwork of our every-day thoughts! mused the young parson. Here this dear child's sweet pious meditations did not forsake her when she slept, and God has a lesson in all this for her. "Well, Phœbe," he asked, recover-

ing himself from his reverie, "has God taught you nothing in your dream?"

"Yes, sir; 'spec he wanted me to know how, if I couldn't *work*, the blessed Saviour's life could be in me, and that the glory could be shined out if I suffered patient."

"That is just what he would have you know, my dear child," said the little parson.

"Well, Mr. Meagre," said Phoebe, "when you pray with me afore you go, won't you ask our Heavenly Father, to forgive me cause I cried so when the cramp doubled up my hands and feet in knots. I know'd it was wrong, but the pains did hurt so! But the pains didn't hurt as much as the Blessed Jesus sufferin's hurt Him when He sweat blood and was crucified on the cross. O, Mr. Meagre, nails went right through His hands and feet."

"It was not sinful in you to cry," broke in the young parson, vainly trying to keep back his tears. "You did not murmur, *I know you did not murmur*," he added with warmth.

"Yes, I did, Mr. Meagre," said Phoebe, calmly. "I wished my Heavenly Father would take me when He wasn't ready. 'Spec He know'd I wasn't polished enough yet; but, Mr. Meagre, tell Him He may make me suffer a whole heap more — much as He thinks right if only He puts me in the temple like the Master Builder put the crooked stick in the temple He was buildin' for His glory to shine in."

All that Paul had ever said about sufferings and

glory, seemed to flash into the young parson's mind, and he poured it out for the comfort of the afflicted child. Then he prayed that she might be enabled to endure patiently, to the end, and at last be *crowned* with glory! as of the glory of the Lord. Had not that glory already begun to be revealed?

When Rev. Petit left the cottage that evening, he did not go home immediately, but spent several hours under an apple-tree in a remote corner of the orchard. Here, to tell the truth, he sought to relieve his heart through the fountains of his eyes. Nor were his tears those of mere sentiment, although he recognized a great deal of æsthetic beauty in what he saw of Phoebe that day. They were real penitential tears. He felt that he had been one of the most ungrateful wretches that ever lived. For he had enjoyed every earthly blessing—yea, his whole life had been one big mercy. He had never known physical suffering; he had never known a real want. A beautiful sky had always spread itself above him. Even the clouds of domestic affliction that had gathered over his home from time to time, had been fringed with heavenly light. And yet he had not attained to anything like the degree of grace exhibited in the life of his afflicted little parishioner. Was he fit to be her pastor? He thought not. Had the new life ever been imparted to him? He almost doubted it. And the only consolation he could find, was in looking away from himself to the One whose glorious merits might avail for all.

It was quite dark when the young parson exchanged his solitude for the company of Mr. and Mrs. Middleton in their pleasant drawing-room, and when he related to them the conversation that had taken place that day, tears rolled down the good woman's cheeks, and her kind husband had recourse to his handkerchief.

That night, when Mr. Meagre went to his own room, he found a copy of Lord Byron's poems lying open on his table. Glancing at the top of the page his eye caught the words, "Deformed transformed." The Rev. Petit quickly closed the book, and was strongly tempted to throw it out of the window. He opened his Bible and read about the Shekinah—the visual presence of God in the tabernacle—not only the type of Him in whom dwelt the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and of the Church—the perpetual home of the Spirit, but the representation of what every human body may become—a temple of the Holy Ghost. He read the account of the Saviour's transfiguration, where the glory of God broke through the veil, and showed the brightness that is to be revealed in us. He turned to passage after passage that spoke of the transforming nature and power of that grace, by which the heirs of salvation are to be made like their Living Head. And when he thought of the spirit of Holiness that breathed through Phœbe's life, and already seemed to irradiate her countenance, and remembered that all this was to find its true consummation at last in the redemption

of her body, he saw in it an illustration of the beauty and reality of our holy religion such as he had never seen before.

CHAPTER XLV.

PHŒBE'S NEW SORROW.

LITTLE Phœbe Ross was still living when Rev. Mr. Meagre's regular ministry at Pumbeditha terminated, and his sorrow at going away was greatly increased by the fact that he had to take leave of the dear child. To Phœbe, too, this was a heavy stroke, for she loved her pastor as one member of the body mystical should love another, and looked up to him as one who spoke as the oracles of God. It had never occurred to her that she would be separated from him until she was taken to her rest. That event was to be her release, and she looked forward to it as children usually look forward to the crowning festivities of a holiday. She spoke of the fact that her body would be put under the ground, as she spoke of its being laid on her bed when a day of weary suffering had come to a close. Then the resurrection hymn would be sung just as her mother sometimes continued a Christian lullaby, for her own comfort after her child had been soothed to sleep by it. In all of this Mr. Meagre was to take a prominent part. She did

not know any other minister, and could not see how he was to be spared from the programme she had made out for her burial. Yes, it was all arranged in Phoebe's mind, what every one was to do. Mrs. Middleton had promised to dress her in white, and Miss Molly was to lay some pale roses on her breast, and otherwise deck her for the bridal of the tomb. But above all, her pastor, who had been with her "all the time," was to give her the communion just before she died, if she had no spasm, and after she was gone he was to conduct the funeral services, and tell the people how good God had been to her.

Phoebe often spoke of these things to Mr. Meagre. "Then I'll be most happiest of all of you ones then," she said one day. "My spirit 'll turn back to smile on you, when it gits free and is goin', and I'll be purty nigh tempted to pity you ones then, but I won't think myself 'bove you cause I'll have it best, for I'll know more'n ever that it's God's favor that I've got it best."

Was it a wonder that the young parson felt sad at parting with Phoebe, — that night after night, as he was trying to determine his duty, the figure of the deformed little girl would come before him and make him feel that it would almost break his heart-strings to leave her? Ah, there was one of the strongest ties to bind him to his present field of labor; and once or twice, when the question of "go" or "stay," was under debate, the mere hope that he might be spared to perform the last office that Phoebe's Christian love

had assigned to him as far as she was concerned, almost turned the beam in favor of his remaining where he was. Alas! there were some things that he could not control, and Phœbe had to be told that she must lose her pastor. "Who's to do everything for me then? Who's to give me the sacrament and bury me?" she asked.

Dear child! the plans she had formed were to be broken in upon, and this distressed her sadly. Besides, as said before, she loved her pastor almost as much as he loved her, and the idea of being separated from him worked upon her delicate nerves so much, that she was thrown into a dreadful convulsion. She recovered from this, however, and then censured herself for having murmured. After that she bore her bereavement with marked serenity. When she bade Mr. Meagre good-bye, it was with the evident expectation of meeting him again, only the meeting, Phœbe thought, would be—in heaven.

The young parson visited Pumbeditha occasionally after he had resigned the pastorate there, and of course always went to see the little girl. He found her the same bright Christian, "only waiting 'till her change would come." Once or twice her thoughts went back to the old channel. "'Twould be nice," she said, "if I'd get to go home while Mr. Meagre's here. Then he'd git the people to sing the Saviour's words 'bout His bein' the resurrection, as He said 'em without any verses, as the Christians sung 'em when

they buried the little girl that the tyrants killed in the Cat'combs long time ago." But it was not God's will that she should be relieved then, and she was submissive.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE GOLD BECOMES DIM.

By the time the events here recorded, together with a great many more not recorded, had transpired, Rev. Petit Meagre had been pastor of the Gainfield parish about four years—a longer period than any other man had continued there, except Mr. Hugenot, whose prayers and toil, and tears and blood had witnessed his devotion to the people of that charge. And by this time, Elder Strapiron, his amiable spouse, and others of that ilk, having grown in grace, were anxiously waiting for their change—of pastors.

The young clergyman, it will be recollected, had been heralded as a juvenile golden-mouthed John Chrysostom of the nineteenth century, who was to throw his elder professional brethren into the shade, take down their conventicles, and use the material in building up his own congregation.

Even those who heard Rev. Petit preach his "trial sermon" seemed to have this expectation; but it was disappointed in the end, although it may be said, with-

out vanity, that the young divine's subsequent discourses were improvements upon his first "powerful effort." He had studied hard, and if he brought less bloom to the pulpit, from time to time, he certainly brought more fruit. But Mr. Corneel's members did not always wish to hear Rev. Petit, when they had no service in their own church. One or two of Doctor Hale's people, who had been induced to come and taste for themselves, did not care to sip the new wine, because the old was better; nay, even Mr. Surcingle went back to Dr. Kay, in the course of two weeks, and some of Mr. Meagre's own communicants went to other churches occasionally, for the sake of variety.

Albeit, Rev. Petit tried hard, and perhaps foolishly, to meet the wishes of some of his people in one respect. They were dreadfully opposed to seeing a minister use a manuscript, and so their beloved young preacher resolved to walk before them without the aid of any such crutch. He wrote his sermons carefully, and although he never could commit one to memory, he studied his subject so well, that he usually got along smoothly, "without the sign of a note before him."

Once there was something like a departure from this regular course, which, as it turned out, however, did not give the offence that the young parson apprehended. He wished to give a long quotation from Dr. Chalmers, which just covered a point that he was anxious to present to his people in a strong light. He could not commit the quotation, for it was a two-col-

umn page long, so he wrote it off on a sheet of foolscap, took it to the pulpit, and giving the Scotch divine due credit, read it at the proper place, and then proceeded with his discourse in the usual way. Fearing, however, that he might have done violence to the feelings of some of his auditors, he afterwards apologized for it to a young deacon. But the deacon—a most unsophisticated young man—relieved his pastor's anxiety by saying: “Don't be troubled about that, Mr. Meagre; *I only wish the discourse had all been Chalmer's.*”

But this apparent extemporaneous preaching, although it cost the young parson double labor, seemed to be so easy, that a part of his flock concluded that he did not study, and appointed a committee-man to tell the preacher that it “was highly desirable that he should search out some *deep* subject, and bring it to the sacred desk already writ out.” This seemed to be in the spirit of the man who wished his pastor to give the people some Greek and Latin, not that they understood it, but because they paid for the best, and might as well have it.

The representative of the Consistorial College took occasion to discharge his duty one evening, just as the young parson was going into the church to preach—the worst time in the world to annoy a man with raven-croakings. However, the Rev. Petit replied pleasantly, that he could gratify them that night, and going to the pulpit, he “searched out a deep written sarimont,” that had laid in the back of the Bible.

year, spread it upside down before him, turned over the leaves, and preached the sermon he had in his mind before the good elder met him. Not until he had closed the Bible, at the end of the last page of the manuscript, and raised his hands to ask a blessing upon his work, did the moral quality of his action occur to him. Then he saw that he had, as a minister of the Most High God, in a holy place, enacted a lie—burnt strange fire upon the altar, to pander to low prejudices of unreasonable men. He felt that he deserved to be smitten, and when at the foot of the pulpit stairs, he was met with “That’s something like the thing now,” he fully exposed the whole proceeding, and declared that he would, thenceforth, read or not read sermons and prayers, as he thought best, and never deceive the people, or put himself in a false position before his Lord and Master — a resolution that he has faithfully kept ever since, although it has cost him some patronage.

But do what he would, he failed to please some of these folks. And although they had praised at least three of his “pulpit efforts,”—“the trial sermon,” the one he had “repeated,” and the one on the “blessedness of giving,”—they at last concluded that he had never preached a good discourse in his life. This idea was given out, not to the ministers of Rev. Petit’s Synod, for the members of that body had become convinced that any effort to please some people was vain; but occasionally a travelling brother would listen to their talk, and encourage it by saying how differently

and how much better he did at home, and then going away and telling to the Church, that the congregation at Gainfield was withering under Meagre's ministry.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE FEMALE SEWING SOCIETY.

BUT besides the young parson's deficiency in the pulpit, there were other objections to him. "It was easy to see he was'nt the right man, directly he came back empty from that collecting trip. He had the promise from above, that things would a been laid plentifully to his hands, if only he'd appear'd before the people with strong cryin' and supplication like he was commanded in the good book."

It made no difference to some of these people that Mr. Meagre's necessary expenses were so far above his salary that he was obliged to pay hundreds from his own pocket for the privilege of serving them. It made no difference that, at the proper time, he had induced some wealthy friends, living at a distance, to have the church repaired, so as to be comfortable to preach and worship in, and beautiful to look upon, without any expense to the congregation, except one hundred dollars, which was gathered from a liberal community by means of a fair. All that was only the

tithing of the mint and anise. The payment of the debt still due "to a few of us," by funds collected abroad, was the weightier matter, that had been omitted.

It will be remembered, however, that the four hundred dollar debt still resting upon the church was, according to the agreement with the District Synod, to be settled by the members of the congregation.

When this ruling was first announced, it was thought advisable that the amount should not be allowed to increase. And so a "Female sewing society was established," the object of which was, as the constitution said, "to pay the interest upon the remainder of the balance of the back-standing debt."

One year the proceeds of this society amounted to one hundred dollars, and a large majority of the members proposed to take a part of the money and pay an oil bill of long standing. Against this the minority filed an injunction, and called in a brother who took a "deep interest" in the matter, as arbiter. *He* decided that it would be unconstitutional to alienate the funds in that way. The majority then proposed that all the surplus money should go towards paying the principal; but the judge being a strict constructionist, ruled, that according to the instrument that governed them, all the money raised by the society was to be paid for *interest*. An attempt was next made to call in some of the other brethren, but it was declared that the society was a "Female one," with

which the men had nothing to do, and all those favorable to giving them a voice were publicly ostracised.

Some of the outsiders protested against the payment of such a heavy interest as twenty-five per cent., when the law only allowed six, but the brother who wore the ermine only said: "There are three of us, and by the time the money is divided, there won't be much more than six per cent. apiece on the whole amount," and when it was urged that each creditor was not entitled to interest on the whole amount, but on the part due to him, the good brother exclaimed, "I don't care, I can only say in the language of the evangelical prophet, 'Sink or swim, live or die, survive or perish, I am for the constitution now and forever, one and inseparable.'"

Of course this proceeding raised a "fuss," and the higher ecclesiastical court was obliged to investigate the matter, when it was found, not only that some of the brethren were disposed to take exorbitant interest, but that the principal claimed was not due to them, as their own subscriptions had never been paid; and vouchers were produced to show that they had been more than compensated, according to the contract entered into for building the church. The dear brethren had unfortunately killed the hen that laid the golden egg.

Still it was argued that Huguenot and Meagre were to blame for the investigation, and that "all the fuss might have been avoided if our present pastor had collected the money and paid it over without saying

anything about it. As it is, his influence is gone with some of us. But a body can't say much agin any more preachers about that, or Synod might appint another committee and take a body to task, and so we will only have to endure sufferin' like good soldiers, 'till Meagre sends in his resignation of his own free will, and allows us to pick on another man that don't know everything about our past trials, and will make an effort to do us justice."

CHAPTER XLVIII.

NEEDLES AND THORNS.

ALTHOUGH Othello's occupation was gone, the Female Sewing Society still professed to keep up its organization. The best women of the congregation did not attend its meetings, however, for it only met semi-occasionally and informally, and, indced, had dwindled down to a little sociable, at which the merits or rather the demerits of preachers, church members, and people generally were discussed—a sort of "Star chamber," at which Rev. Petit Meagre was often condemned to moral and ecclesiastical decapitation.

One evening when this society was in session, Miss Smartley, who had just returned from a visit to a neighboring State, threw up her head majestically,

and said: "Well, I'm sick and tired of Meagre. He come here recommended as one of the best licenshes ever was, and he ain't much after all. Wish he'd go away and let Mr. Bilger come here. Me and him's acquainted. He tuck me to a pic-nic while I was gone, and I tell you he's smart. Said some Latin to me that day, and writ some poetry 'bout me. I show'd it to mother, and she told pap it would be nice if he'd become our minister."

"Is he good lookin'?" asked Matilda Tilt, who appears to have been a sort of Ishmaelites in the camp.

"O splendid, 'Tilda," replied Miss Smartley. "Has long, slick hair, and parts it in the middle, and wears it behind his ears, and he's got two big gold rings and a breast pin with his pictur' in it."

"Does he soap his hair?" asked Miss Tilt.

"O 'Tilda, ain't you ashamed to talk that way 'bout a minister. I'd be afraid to talk disrespectful 'bout *enny* preacher."

"'Cept Mr. Meagre," replied Miss Tilt.

"O Meagre!" broke in Miss Languish. "I never could bear him since that time he took me for old Mrs. Porwiggle. Hope that Bilger ain't blind."

"O no, he's got delicious blue eyes," said Miss Smartley. "Said he didn't have to use *enny* microscope when he studied 'stronomy. He knows all 'bout 'stronomy. That night comin' from the pic-nic he show'd me which star was the milky way and which one the summer solstix."

"Well, *my* objection to Meagre is them prayers," said

Mrs. Rowser. "I 'tacked him 'bout 'em one day right before his face, and you know everybody ain't got the spunk to do that. 'Mr. Meagre,' ses I, 'if the people'd a know'd you was goin' to use them prayers when you come here to speak your trial-sermon, you'd a never got 'lected to this place.'"

"Don't 'spect he know'd who he was talkin' to," said Mrs. Languish; "but what did he say?"

"Kind of smiled like, and said it was the Lord's prayer I referred to, and he had used it that very first Sunday he was here, and 'spected to use it the last. But la me! I thought he was only skeered gettin' up before us all the first time, and could'nt think of a better one, for he looked awful young; and here he's been usin' it ever since. Now I'd like to know what's the use to pay a man for comin' here and sayin' a prayer that's in the Testament not fur from the beginnin' of the book, where we can read it fur ourselves. I think a man that's been through two colleges oughter be more originaler."

"Mr. Bilger 'll just suit you, Mrs. Rowser," said Miss Smartley. "He went in the seminary before he was half through college, and got out of that in less than a year. Says he don't believe in a man of talents spendin' a lifetime in gettin' ready to preach. He know'd all of Byron and Spearshake long ago, and makes eloquent prayers."

"There ain't no doubt but Meagre's prayers is very childish," said Miss Polly Perkins. "That Lord's prayer I thot was only 'ntended for children

before they went to bed. And then that possle's creed's as old as the hills. Mother's grandmother larnt it to her, and she 'peated it just before she died, and said it was a comfort to her, and everybody knows she was childish — that is about prayers. She was sensible to the last 'bout everything else, for when I axed her if I could'nt have the feather bed being as Nancy got the bolt of toe linen, she said 'yes, only love one another,' just as plain as could be, and that's why I swore in court she had her right mind, as I told Mike Stoner when we was talkin' about them prayers and he axed me. Mike said Meagre owned up the prayers was *childlike*, but said that was different from bein' *childish*."

"You just 'spress my ideas, Polly, 'bout them prayers bein' childish," said Miss Margaret Bolton. "Goodness knows, all the children Meagre has anything to do with knows 'em. There was little Mary, John's little gal, had 'em pat as you please, and she said 'em before she died just like your mother. Believe me or not, that child died in Meagre's arms. I'll jist tell you how it was. You know Meagre always was fond of Mary, 'specially after her mother died, and often come and took her when he went walking, and he come to see her directly he heard she had the scarlet fever. I 'spect he had a notion she would'nt live; believe the doctor 'fided everything to him, cause he was good at givin' medicine and 'nus-in' sick people. Well, he was with little Mary most all the time, and that night that she died he said he

would mind her while me and John went to supper, and when we come up he was prayin', and nobody to hear him but that child, and don't you think she was sayin' that possle's creed with him! Only to think of it, and she was'nt more nor five years old. Well, presently she wanted to go to him, and he never seemed to think of that new coat of his'n till it was all spiled, he was so taken up like, and his fingers was all sore wipin' the poor little thing's mouth—scarlet fever's so bad, you know. Well, the tears rolled down Meagre's cheeks till Mary's sufferins was over, and then he closed her eyes, and smiled and said she was with her Saviour and her mother. But I always did partly blame Anna—that's John's wife—for Mary's knowin' them prayers. You see Meagre come to see Anna every day when she had consumption, and fotch her books and flowers, and read and talked to her 'bout the clouds when the sun was settin', and 'bout heaven. He fotch her a book called Literature—had prayers in for when you got awake at night and for all times—from the Psalms like, and Anna 'fused some of them things into Mary. You see Meagre had an idea that John's wife was refined and interestin' above her station, and fatched some of the quality gals in town to see her. They say there's papers in a court-house somewhere showin' that Anna's parents died when she was a baby, and her step-uncle gambled away her fortune and put her in an Orphan 'sylum. He killed himself afterwards, and left that ivory picture Anna had with the 'sylum

keeper for her. The letter that was sent with it said it was her mother, and I 'spect it was, for John's wife favored it as much as little Mary favored *her*. Well, when Anna was dyin' she got Meagre to hold Mary up till she put it on her neck. 'Twas as much as Meagre could do, too. I tell you he don't always smile, for directly John's wife was dead, he went out behind the rose-bush and cried till he shook like a leaf. But them prayers that Anna and Mary both said when they was dyin' fotch this all up."

"Well," said Miss Tracy Trotter, "my beau ideal of prayers is them offered by Mr. Fulmer, the young Methodist minister in the country."

"He can't beat Mr. Bilger," said Miss Smartley, excitedly.

"O Dora Smartley!" exclaimed Miss Trotter, "that Bilger seems to be settin' you crazy. What in the world are *you* siggerin' about, 'Tilda Tilt? recon' cause people will say Mr. Fulmer's payin' 'tention to me, I can't speak the truth about him. But who has a better right to judge than I have, when he boards at my sister's, and I am out there half of my time?"

"O Dora," said Miss Tilt, with a wink, "you know Rev. Dickerson Carlisle, here in town, has been over there to Araby, where Moses, and Aaron, and Deuteronomy and all them lived, and he said he only saw one thing in all his journey that 'minded him of Fulmer. It was an animal with ears so big it could most lay down on one and use the other for a coverlet. And, what's

more, they say Rev. Asbury Coke, the presidin' elder, ain't goin' to recommend him to the conference."

"Carlisle and Coke's both jealous of Fulmer cause he ain't college bred," said Miss Trotter. "Here's this great young Mr. Steady ain't college bred neither, and they make fuss enough over him."

"That only shows they ain't prejudiced agin young men, cause they hav'nt had a good chance if they have religion and common sense. Heard 'em say at the Young Men's Christian 'sociation that some of their best men were self-made," said Miss Tilt.

"I don't care what they said. Mr. Fulmer's got more brains than all the preachers in these parts," said Miss Trotter. "La me! that time old Mrs. Low got throw'd out of the wagon and killed, he did give us a beautiful prayer. He told us more about Mrs. Low in that one prayer than Meagre, or Kay, or Carlisle'd a told in a week. I never did like Mrs. Low, that's to 'sociate with, till I heard that prayer, and then I did say she was put in jail wrong. Then Mr. Fulmer's sermon was so affectin'. He said he never rubbed his back agin a college; he was led by the spirit; and, believe me or not, when he said he hoped we'd all live as Mrs. Low lived, and die as she died, there was'nt a dry eye in the house."

"Recon' if you'd live like she lived, you'd be parted from your husband, and go to jail for stealin' roastin' ears," said Miss Smartley.

"And if you'd die as she died, you'd get your neck broke," said Miss Tilt.

"O 'Tilda, how stupid you are," said Miss Trotter. "Everybody knows Mr. Fulmer meant *spiritual* death."

"Come to think about it, that does make it better," said Miss Tilt, ironically.

"Well, 'Tilda, think before you speak next time. And as for you, Miss Smartley, I thank my stars I ain't got no husband."

"Or you wouldn't be so crazy after Fulmer," rejoined Miss Smartley.

"Well, I don't care what you say. Carlisle is prejudiced, for he was at Mrs. Low's funeral, and when Mr. Fulmer preached and prayed so purty about her, he seemed onrestless as our Phil. when a circus is a comin', and he ain't got no money to go to it; and he never said 'Amen' onst, but just looked up at the ceiling wild like. But when I die I want Mr. Fulmer to preach my funeral, and then I'll be sure to die the death of the righteous."

"Well, for my part," said Mrs. Strapiron, "I don't care what kind of prayers Meagre uses. I never was much for prayers, and think if a body goes to meetin' reg'lar and hears the sarmon, it's enough. No doubt them prayers is childish though, for our children's lips is movin' when Meagre ses 'em. I punched Stephe with my parasol one day and made him be still, but he went to sleep then and fell off the bench, so I thought I'd let him go on with his foolishness, if he didn't disturb his pap by it. You know his pap works hard all week, and looks on Sunday as a day of rest. But what I do object to in Meagre is his 'tentions to

trash. He goes round to old Mrs. Sweitzer's every week, and tries to read the Dutch Bible to her; and one day Stephe was bringin' the cow, and he peeped thro' the palins and saw Meagre and the old woman on their knees under the hop-arbor side the house, and Meagre was readin' a Dutch prayer. Recon' he didn't know one by heart, cause he ain't as far larnt yit as Kay, but I thot if he spent his time that way, among such people, it was'nt no wonder he had to speak an old sarmon that time everybody said it was the best one he ever spoke."

"Goin' among trash ain't nothing for Meagre. He ain't nigh as select as Mr. Bilger," said Miss Smartley.

"No, nor as Mr. Fulmer neither," said Miss Trotter. "La me! that mornin' Bill Tuttle fell down in the street with cholera, me and Mr. Fulmer was just comin' past, and I tell you we got out of the way. But the first person young Doctor Randal sent for was Meagre, and they say them two had their coats off all that day rubbin' Bill before the cramp left him. Mr. Fulmer said afterwards he was'nt bound to risk his life for everybody, even if Coke did say he disgraced himself."

"One thing makes me mad at Meagre," said Miss Lydia Huggermugger. "You know after Hugenot went away, we had the pulpit painted blue and pink, and here when the church was fixed Mr. Petit Meagre had it painted white again."

"I think I could get our pastor to correct all the

things you complain of, ladies," said Mrs. Popple. "You know he often asks my advice."

"Mrs. Popple," said Mrs. Strapiron, "'spose me and you and Mrs. McAndlish forms a committee to ax Meagre 'bout the way that pulpit's painted.

"I won't sarve," said Mrs. McAndlish. "Tried to lecture Meagre this afternoon 'bout passin' our house last Monday without callin', but he shut me up by sayin' I once made him promise not to call on wash-day. He was very perlite, but you don't catch me 'tackin' him agin."

"I'll go on the committee," said Miss Languish; "I would like to ax Meagre what he knows about colors."

"Well, then, we three's the committee," said Mrs. Strapiron. "But it's time to adjourn now."

And the society did adjourn, all the members saying they had spent a delightful evening.

It may be stated here, by way of parenthesis, that the above named committee afterwards called on the young parson — tried to take him by surprise, so as to get a peep into his room in which it was said there was a Brussels carpet, a French bedstead with a white spread on it, some fine pictures, and many other nice things. Besides, each of the ladies on the committee had a special object in calling on Mr. Meagre. Mrs. Popple had spoken so much of her influence over the "dear little preacher," that she at last fancied that she *had* vast power with him, and she wished to give a grand demonstration of it. Miss Languish

wanted to give his reverence a cut about his near-sightedness, and Mrs. Strapiron had become so accustomed to bossing her husband, that she thought she could play the same game with her pastor. But Rev. Petit met and entertained the ladies in the parlor below stairs; and somehow the courage with which they left home seemed to have oozed out at the end of their fingers. Mrs. Popple was all affability and sweetness, Miss Languish was the personification of disdain, and Mrs. Strapiron wore a mingled expression of anger and disappointment; but neither of them introduced the business that brought them there, and as the young parson was not bound to presume that the call was anything but a social one, he did not relieve their embarrassment by doing it for them: he was content to talk pleasantly, and musingly draw a lead-pencil over the back of a pamphlet that laid on the table upon which his right arm rested.

In the course of half an hour the committee arose and departed without saying one word about paint, prayers, trash, or bleared eyes. The report made to the society was, that there was "no use to bite on a file."

The next day a piece of crumpled buff paper was found near the parlor door. Upon it were drawings of three women. One was trying to fold a frightened dove to her breast; another was in the act of presenting some one with a pair of spectacles; but whether the third wore horns, the "deponent saith not." Fortunately, the drawings were so poorly executed that no one could recognize any likeness between them and their originals.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE CHOIR.

It will be seen from the last chapter, that the criticisms upon the Rev. Petit were generally what an intelligent person would have taken as the highest compliments to his ministry; but those who uttered them did not know this, and what they said was intended to express disapprobation, so that the Female Sewing Society was a thorn in the young man's flesh.

And then there was in the end gallery of the church an acephalous compound, called a choir. The Rev. Petit had tried hard to correct some of the absurdities for which that appliance of public worship had long been noted, but could not iron out all the wrinkles; for choirs are sensitive things, and there are people all the world over who cannot be induced to forego the sublime, in order to avoid the ridiculous. As is usually the case, some of the best people of the congregation belonged to this choir, and some of the most troublesome. Among the latter class was Miss Lucinda Pedal. This young lady had a remarkable voice, for which she deserved about as much credit as she did for the color of her hair; but had she possessed the voice of an angel, no one would have coveted it, if with the voice it would have been necessary

to take her natural disposition, for that would have been to dower one's days with the well-known propensities of a mule.

One Sunday morning the aforesaid choir attempted to render a modern American anthem, with all the parts and complications in it that ever a musical genius conceived of. The piece was commenced with a gusto that would have startled Julien himself; but just one minute before the time for Miss Pedal to "carry her solo," the young lady got stubborn and would not sing a bit. Of course, an important wheel was gone, and the whole machine stopped. This was regarded by the "audience" as an ordinary breakdown; but the young pastor saw at once that there was some wrong feeling at the bottom of it, and preached with a heavy heart.

That evening and the next Sunday morning, Miss Pedal sat down with the congregation, apparently impressed with the idea that all heaven and earth were ready to put on mourning, because she did not go up stairs and sing.

This action of Miss Pedal's was, of course, noticed by the congregation, as she was regarded as "one of the principal ones in the choir," and some injudicious person dignified the matter by asking "'Cinda" the cause of it; to which she replied: "Harriet Meekly had no business to move the book we was singin' out of, just when I was a goin' to strike in. If she could'nt see, she might have got another one. But *I* show'd 'em they was 'pendent on me."

The Rev. Petit's only regret was that Miss Pedal did not get mulish a few minutes sooner, so that the whole piece could have been omitted, or else commenced by none except those who had grace enough not to cut up such capers in what purported to be the worship of the sanctuary. And he certainly would have allowed Miss Lucinda to pout until she was satisfied; but it was a malignant case of sinfulness that expressed itself in such sulks and impudence at home, that her poor old mother had to appeal to her pastor for redress, and besides, quite a number of the members of the church, young and old, made the infinitesimal affair, an occasion for a quarrel that threatened the peace of the congregation. Then the young parson was forced to take notice of it; and when his gentle remonstrance failed, he was obliged to remind his people that there was such a thing as church discipline. When the power of the keys was talked about, old John Flailer, who was distinguished for his severity in all his talk and actions, showed a disposition to kick the traces, saying: "It is none of Meagre's bisness how much the members of the church fights." Yea, he grew quite Hudibrastic behind his pastor's back, threatening

"To prove the doctrine orthodox,
By Apostolic blows and knocks."

As, however, there was a long score against Mr. Flailer himself, and as he was aware that his pastor had constitutional authority to exercise the discipline alone,

if his vestry refused to act, the old gentlemen grew wisely meek before Rev. Petit's face, and the whole excitement was soon quelled.

But the fragrance of the young functionary's fidelity remained; and afterward, when these people desired to file objections against him, they could sing,

“Long, long, be my heart with such memories filled!
Like the vase in which roses have once been distill'd,
You may break, you may ruin the vase, if you will,
But the scent of the roses will hang round it still.”

CHAPTER L.

THE RESIGNATION.

It may be inferred, from what has been said in the last two chapters, that there were elements at work at the Gainfield congregation calculated to cause the young parson some annoyance. True, here, as is generally the case, the number that were disaffected toward him bore a small proportion to the number that were not only satisfied with him, but greatly attached to him. The complaints made against him, too, were just the same that had been made against his predecessor, and were of such a nature as to give evidence that ignorance, illiberality, and a restless desire for change, were at the bottom of them.

Still, these few persons, owing to the accident of their position in the congregation, had succeeded in wearing out and worrying away better pastors than Rev. Petit, and although things had changed somewhat, they might have made him succumb in the end; for the processes by which congregational ills are overcome often extend through long, long years, and call for the patient endurance and sacrificing toil of a goodly succession of God's servants.

But before these things were brought to bear very heavily on the young parson, he accepted a call to another field of labor, and, of course, resigned his pastorate of the Gainfield parish. He gave notice of his intention to do this to some of his best members, such as Mr. Middleton, some time before he announced it publicly. They were sorry that he felt it his duty to do so, for they knew how warm his attachments were; but they had an intelligent recognition of the circumstances in the case, and acquiesced in it with becoming spirit. Some there were, such as Mrs. Ross and David Early, who looked upon it simply as a great bereavement, and had more difficulty in becoming reconciled to it. How it affected little Phœbe Ross need not be told again. But perhaps few persons felt it more than honest-hearted Mike Stoner. Poor fellow! he seemed to be conscious that in many instances his pastor had been ungenerously dealt with, and spoke of it freely.

"Mr. Meagre," he said, "wouldn't never a left us if he'd been treated right. We druv him away; and

and it's enough to make Tom Hickman turn round in his grave."

When the young parson told the people at Gainfield that he was about to preach his last sermon to them, the congregation "bust into tears," and none of them were more hysterical than those who had previously said they wished he'd go away. Some very loud sobs came from the direction in which the pews occupied by Mr. Strapiron and Mr. Flailer were situated; and when the choir attempted to sing a parting ode, Miss Lucinda Pedal, who had gone back to her place voluntarily, when she found no one would coax her, broke down with emotion. But it was too late to cry then.

Afterwards the "Female Sewing Society" met and voted their "beloved pastor" a pincushion that had been left on hand — a monument of congregational attachment that Rev. Petit unfortunately lost in the process of packing up his books and dry goods.

Mr. Meagre did not leave his first charge without sincere regret. His heart bled to say good-bye to the dear friends mentioned in this work, and many others whose names have here found no record. Yea, he found it hard to leave even those who had given him so much trouble. He had labored for and endured with them so long, that it had become a second nature to do so; and his ministry among them had for him the fascination of a difficult problem, at which one has worked hard and dislikes to give up, although its solution may be intrusted to more competent hands.

He had gone into their midst determined to be entirely successful. In this determination there may have been a little unconscious self-reliance which his Master saw fit to rebuke.

Upon the whole, however, the young parson had much to be thankful for. If those four hundred Sunday sermons, and two hundred weekly lectures, and thousands of pastoral visits, with frequent private admonitions and consistorial battles, had taxed and strained his popularity—if he had often felt constrained, by a sense of duty, to do what people liked him a little less for doing, he had carried almost every point he wished to carry without any open rupture, and left things in a better condition than he had found them. The outward affairs of the church had been vastly improved, the number of members had almost doubled, and the internal life of the congregation greatly advanced. Many reputedly queer people had been won not only to him, but to Christ and His cause; and if others did retain their annoying peculiarities, these were beginning to be entirely understood, and bid fair to have no very great weight with the people in the future. Some one else might now enter upon his labors, and carry on the work, even as he himself had entered upon the labors of his brethren who had preceded him there in the ministry. For all of this, God's name alone could be praised.

Nor was the young parson unmindful of the fact, that in quitting Gainfield he was leaving a most delightful community. Nowhere within the range of his

observation was there collected, in and around so small a place, so much refined, intelligent Christian society. Nowhere had more courtesies and kindnesses been extended to him. He had found in these more than a compensation for the little hardships he had endured during his labors there. Thousands of times have these things been in his mind since; and as often as the dear friends who did so much to make his stay pleasant have been remembered, has the prayer gone up to God that the cup of cold water given to the least of Christ's disciples might not go unrewarded.

Nor has he prayed for these alone. Every one of his own members has been remembered at the throne of Heavenly grace. Some have doubtless passed away from earth, but should he ever cross the pathway of any that survive, and find them in circumstances of sorrow or distress, it would be a pleasure that he would count dear, to administer, according to the best of his abilities, to their comfort and relief.

Report said "Meagre's a goin' to git married."

CHAPTER LI.

HOWLINGS AND BLEATINGS AFTER A SHEPHERD.

THE young parson received an occasional letter from the people to whom he had ministered in the Gainfield parish, showing that they held him in remem-

brance. A very few are here copied as representative documents.

"GAINFIELD, April 6th, 18—.

"REV. MR. MEAGRE:—

"DEAR SIR—Old widow Grabel's rent has run up to \$16.50, not a cent having been paid since you left here, and I write to know if you will not settle it, and give me some security for the future.

"I know you are under no legal obligation to pay it, as you said you could not be responsible after you resigned here; but you always paid it so punctually, that I thought I might appeal to your Christian generosity. This is all the more necessary, as the heirs of that estate, although rich, are disposed to hold me for all losses on the houses I rent for them, and the amount may come out of my commissions.

"I send you a few of my cards, thinking that if you use your ministerial influence you can send me some business. You see I've taken the liberty to put your name on my card, for reference, as, although no member of any church, I attended your preaching as often as any other.

"Hoping to hear from you soon,

"Yours, &c.,

A. SHAVER, *Collector.*"

As Mr. Shaver was a notorious rascal, who made large *profits* by grinding the poor, Rev. Petit did not think it belonged to Christian generosity to cover his *losses*. The only reply the young parson gave to the letter was made by sending an old copy of the *Gainfield Gazette*, in which the death of Mrs. Grabel was announced as having taken place a few weeks after he had left the place.

The second letter given was a characteristic one, and would have been laughable enough, but for the fact that it breathed a wrong spirit and told a sad tale of disobedience, a broken heart, and a neglected boy.

"GAINFIELD, *January 18th, 18—.*

"DEER BROTHER MEAGRE,

"I take my pen to inform you we is well, and hopping these few lines may find you enjoyin' helth, and I want you to lend me a hundred dollars, as I 'tend to open a little flour and feed store, and also a little coal yarde in this place. We had purty bad luck, our Bill and 'Cinda Pedal run off to state line and got marrit unbeknown's to us. 'Cinda's mother tuck right to her bed, and never got up agin, she died of wexation, which was very foolish. Nobody didn't catch me dyin' for them pesky things, for I was too all-fired mad, and if I'd had my way, they'd bothe been expelled out of meeting long ago. They never was fit to be in it, and 'Cinda give us a heap of trouble 'bout her not singin' that time, and her and Bill's both bound to sup sorrow with a big spoon.

"These feller's up here ain't doin' any better nor when you was here, and none of 'em ain't got enny religion, and I hope you'll send that money by Satterday, bein' as your gettin' a thumpin' big salry, and I promist the money on Satterday, and don't think enny man oughter disappint the public.

"No news 'cept young Dick Spaddle dide last week and was holerin' for you all the time, and wanted 'em to send for 'nother minister, but they thot he was crazy, bein' he had the brain fever, and Doctor Hale gave 'em fits, 'cause they did'nt let him know the boy was sick 'fore he was ded. Please send the money.

"Yourn everlastinly in Gospel chains.

"JOHN FLAILER."

The following might be denominated a business letter:

"MR. PETIT MEAGRE:—

"DEAR SIR:—Once at a vestry meeting held in church just before you went on that collecting trip, you proposed that we should get a sexton, and said that sooner than have the church so dirty you would pay part of the cost yourself. Father then employed old Fritz Nathans to tend the meeting-house for three months, till you made other arrangements; but as father employed Fritz, he had to pay

him, and now I write for you to refund the money to the heirs, as father is no more, and we are settling up the estate.

"The old man's estate turns out bully. Us two children will get nigh on to six thousand dollars apiece, without the widow's dowry, and all the debts are good except yours, and that ain't heard from. Father must have been a good business man to hoard up so much, and nobody knowed he had so much good paper bearing interest.

"I want you to go to all the stores in the city, and see where you can get the cheapest and best silk hats, and send me one; and if it fits and suits me in every respect, I will pay you for it one of these days when times get easier.

"Please send the sexton money by mail. I most forgot to say it is \$9. We took fifty cents off as you only promised to pay part of it, and we want to be honest and liberal.

"Yours, truly,

"CONRAD HUGGERMUGGER, *Executor.*"

This letter was answered by transmitting to Mr. Huggermugger the original receipt, given to his father by Fritz Nathans, which had been countersigned and paid over to the young parson in lieu of so much money, when the next instalment of his salary should have been paid — all his reverence got at the end of that quarter — except seventeen dollars and sixty-two cents.

Mr. Huggermugger wrote back, that the old man must have been in his dotage when he countersigned that receipt, and that it was no wonder he ended his long life with only sixteen thousand dollars.

The young parson thought the old man had been sharp as a steel trap in the transaction referred to, and that such sharpness accounted for the "large amount of good paper bearing interest" that he had

“hoarded,” but that the “bully estate” left to his son had made Conrad feel like *Oliver Twist*, when he asked for “more.”

The next letter was an official one. It was written by a man thirty years old, but looked as if it came from the pen of a boy of ten, who had his one foot under him on the chair and his tongue out when he wrote it. Here it is:

“GAINFIELD, *Feb. 14th*, 18—.

“DEER OLD PASTURE:

“Rev. Calvin Stringent, clerk of Cynod, writ us an episel, sayin’ if yor salry wursent pade soon the subject wood be took notis of. Now don’t be hard on us. We are gittin’ up a faire fur the 22, and if its publist that the money’s fur you, your rich friends will soon paternize us enuf to raise the rocks. Some of ’em ’bout here ses it would be nice if you’d cend on reseat fur the mony as a volentine.

Yourn,

“SAM. HOLLAND, *fur the old man treasury.*”

Imagine the young man’s feelings at the thought of being used as a sick baby to beg by. He fancied he saw stuck upon all the lamp-posts and corners, and stenciled upon the board fences around town, to be read by all his friends and reputed sweet-hearts, these words: “Fair for the benefit of Rev. Petit Meagre. As this young brother is in want, it is hoped that his friends will be liberal in their patronage.” That dose, and self-respect would not stay on the same stomach; so he went to Gainfield in time to prevent any such use of his name, and the Synod afterwards saw him righted.

The letters the young parson received were not all

like those just given. Two or three of another stamp are here presented."

"GAINFIELD, *June 10th*, 18—.

"MY BELOVED PASTOR — I write to let you know we're got a whoppin' big baby, and we are very thankful, but was disappointed 'cause we was anxious to call it after you, and it turned out to be a gal, and the best we could do was to call it Kitty Meagre Stoner, and it is very pert, and Kitty is well and sends her best respects to you. Mr. Meagre, one of the last things you done here was to cut off a piece of John Bolton's wife's rose-bush, and plant it on her grave, and it grow'd and is bloomin', and we planted a slip on Tom Hickman's grave, and that's bloomin' also — we watered both of them for the sake of them that's gone, and for your sake, and the sake of the blessed Saviour, and I am gittin' over your goin' away, as I think the Lord intended us to know a feller mussent cluster overly much around a man, and if we don't meet enny more on earth I hope we will meet in heaven. I remain, yours,

"MICHAEL STONER and KITTY his wife."

Mr. and Mrs. Stoner were congratulated by returning mail. But here is another letter, dated:

"ST. LOUIS, Mo., *April 15th*.

"REV. PETIT MEAGRE:

"DEAR SIR — You must not take my long silence as an evidence that I have forgotten you. Under God, you have had too much to do with my history to admit of that. Would that you knew how often and how gratefully I think of you.

"You were kind enough to say when you advised me to come here, that everything that concerned me would be of interest to you, and so I must tell you about myself. In the first place, I took your advice and did not connect myself with a well-established flourishing congregation, but with a missionary one in which I would have something to do, and this has been an advantage to me.

"I got a class in the Sunday School the second week after I arrived here; and only think, Mr. Meagre, I have since been elected a member of the vestry! Of course, I take a great interest in our little church, and hope to be useful in my small way. Mr. Blake

is my pastor, and a plain common-sense man — just such a one as you would like.

“In the second place I got work immediately—was engaged for some time painting boats on the wharves, but quit that as soon as I could (last November) because the moral surroundings were not good, and the work was rough—nothing but deck painting at that season, which did not suit me. You know I am a little ambitious in my trade.

“Six months ago I was fortunate enough to have some fine graining in a first-class house intrusted to me, and since then I have had plenty to do, as my boss gave me the direction of a good deal of work, and has since opened a branch shop in a part of the city remote from his principal place of business. So if you come here you will see my name on a shingle with Mr. Bonar’s.

“Thus far my business has prospered. Last year I was enabled to take a \$30 pew and pay \$100 toward finishing our little church, after devoting \$300 to the support of my mother. This year I hope to do even better.

“I live and dress plainly; have a little room in which I spend my evenings, making estimates of work, reading the books you recommended to me, and improving my mind generally.

“I will be glad to hear from you, and delighted to see you. Pray for me and believe me,

“Yours, ever,

JAMES GIBBS.”

It may have been an impious way of expressing a holy joy, but when the letter was received, the young parson’s first impulse was to throw up his hat and shout, “Hurrah for Jim Gibbs! ‘not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.’” A year afterward the young parson received a letter mailed at Chicago, Ill., which looked as if it had been given to some person to carry there from Missouri in his pocket. It contained twenty dollars, purporting to be a thank-offering, and was anonymous. An examina-

tion of it convinced the Rev. Petit, that his former young friend, of crack-loo notoriety, had made a poor attempt at disguising his hand-writing.

About two years after Rev. Petit had resigned his first charge, he was filling a temporary engagement in a large city. One day, late in the month of August, he was sweltering along the streets toward the post-office. The weather was so warm that his veritable silk umbrella scarcely kept him from melting, and he longed for the country, where nearly all of his more fortunate professional brethren had gone. He had not yet become rich enough by preaching to buy old Mr. Bingen's place, and build a summer residence upon it, but he did sigh for the pleasant shades and cool water he had enjoyed there, the only time he had visited it. The thought of the place brought to his mind the dear Christian friends he had first met there, and from whom he had not heard for some months.

As a sort of reward for his walk, as he thought, he received a letter that day. When it was given him, he recognized the hand-writing as corresponding with that of some little notes he had received in by-gone days, only now it was a trifle more free and careless. Here, however, was a thick package that required two post-stamps, and he concluded that one of his "early friends" had been kind enough to send him a book mark. He hastily tore the envelope, and found that it was indeed a letter — a long one cover-

ing two large sheets, with closely written matter. It read as follows :

“REV. PETIT MEAGRE :

“DEAR SIR — Our dear little friend, Phœbe Ross, fell asleep in Jesus on the evening of Thursday, 3d inst. She did not die in one of those nervous paroxysms, to which she was subject, as we always feared she would. The Heavenly Father spared her that. For two months previous to her decease, she was entirely free from them, and from any bodily suffering whatever, and her life went out at last like a lamp, not by blast or violence, but for want of oil. The cessation of pain, however, was itself ominous, and her departure was not unexpected to us.

“I need hardly tell you that her end was peace. Such a calm joy — such a matter-of-fact transition from the church militant to the church triumphant I had read of, but never witnessed before. Would that you could have been here. We all thought of you.

“On the day she died, Mrs. Middleton and I were sitting by her side. We thought her sleeping. Presently she opened her eyes, and said : ‘I see’d it.’

“‘What did you see, Phœbe?’ I asked.

“‘O,’ she said, ‘the water-drops of my baptism — them’s all jewels in the sunlight of God’s face, and my Heavenly Father’s goin’ to put them on my head for a crown of life. And all the tears that I cried, and the sweat that looked like beads when I suffered, them’s all gems shinin’ with God’s glory.’

“Mrs. Middleton and I durst not exchange glances, and had to bite our lips to keep from sobbing aloud. ‘Was it a dream, Phœbe?’ I asked.

“‘No,’ she said, with a sweet assurance, ‘It wasn’t a dream.’

“Her mother, who came in about that time, thought her mind wandered, but Mrs. Middleton and I thought differently. You know we think with you, that heaven is nearer to earth than some men wot of. I had been with pa among the sick enough to know, by Phœbe’s pulse, that life was ebbing fast, and I called Mr. Ross and Mrs. Early, who were in the adjoining room. After a little while she bade us all an affectionate farewell. Her appeal to her father to be faithful was touching in the extreme. Among other

things, she said, 'Tell Mr. Meagre I'm just goin' before, and can smile on him when I'm a goin', the same as if he was here.'

"A few moments before she breathed her last, she said: 'God's shinin' on me like the sun shined through the apple-trees the mornin' I fust went to church. He's smilin', and I can go now to the upper temple to be a stone in it. Mr. Meagre and David needn't carry me now, for my Saviour will raise me up like He did the poor cripple in the big picture. He'll give me a body like His own glorious body; when I wakes in His likeness then, I'll be satisfied then. I'll be like Him, for I'll see Him as He is. Miss Mary, sing

"Changed from glory unto glory,"

like you did the fust time I went to church here below.'

"I tried to sing — commenced, but my heart and eyes were so full that I faltered, and at last stopped altogether. It made no difference; the humble strain was taken up by the choir of saints and angels, for the gentle spirit of our little sister had passed from us to the bosom of her God. 'Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them.'

"We arranged the funeral according to some of the customs of the primitive church, about which you used to tell Phœbe, and about which she loved so well to hear. No one was offended. Indeed it seemed to be felt proper that the dear child should be buried with offices differing a little from the barren and often meaningless ceremonies that so many of our congregations employ in these late days. The chants were beautiful, and all the service well rendered. Mr. Huguenot, who now ministers to this congregation stately, officiated. He gave a sermon on the text, 'These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.' The discourse was characterized by pious fervor and extreme simplicity. It was entirely free from argument, and yet what was said seemed to authenticate itself to the minds of all who heard it. No wonder, when Phœbe's life and death were before them.

"Although 'dead, she yet speaketh.' You may have heard that some months ago the holiness of Phœbe's life was the means of bringing her father to the feet of Jesus, when all else seemed to

have failed; and that on the last Sunday that she attended church, Mr. Huguenot baptized him, and gave him the communion in the presence of the congregation. They tell me that there were no dry eyes in the church that day, except the little girl's. *Her* face was radiant with joy. All were surprised to see the old man kneeling at the chancel, except her. She had prayed for it in faith, and looked upon it as a matter of course. Of this I say you may have heard, but you may *not* have heard how Phoebe's death has impressed this whole community. The town seems lonely now that she is gone, but we all feel as if her spirit is still hovering over us. The moral atmosphere around us seems to be roseate with the flush of her triumph, and redolent with the fragrance of her piety. A holy solemnity rests upon us all. The roughest men in the neighborhood speak in subdued tones, as if they were afraid of frightening something away. Mr. Huguenot is here taking advantage of this state of things. May God own and bless his labors!

"Let me tell you a little incident. Mrs. Middleton and I have determined to make the place where little Phoebe's body rests a pleasant spot. Old Mr. Ross and David Early insist upon doing the work for us. They have already sodded the mound, and prepared the ground around it for a white microphylla rose and some heart's ease. Since the burial, we have frequently gone to the couch of the little saint, when the day dawned, for pious meditations and prayer, always taking with us a few fresh flowers to leave on the grave. On last Sunday morning we found that some one had anticipated us in this last respect, for a rude wreath of evergreens was lying there.

"While expressing our surprise, we discovered Mrs. Spotters sitting behind the tall head-stone of a neighboring grave. The poor woman, all unconscious of what we had been doing, had brought the wreath as a tribute to departed worth, but said that she had come early, so that no one would see her do it. Then she threw herself upon the grave, and said that she had sinned against Phoebe, and knew that in doing so she had sinned against Him who had said, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it to the least of my disciples, ye have done it unto me.' Once she had looked down on the little deformed girl, but now she wished she could be a cripple all her life, so that she could share Phoebe's happiness.

"Mrs. Middleton spoke kindly to her — told her being a cripple could not make her what Phoebe was; and that what every one loved in the child was her Christian character. 'Such a character,' she added, of course, 'can be attained only through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.'

"You see how long a letter I have written you with mine own hand, but the duty of writing has been assigned to me by common consent, and I know you will be interested in the details of the little darling's death, however inadequately I have described them. You will excuse me, too, when you see that these pages have been blistered with tears, for you yourself are not the kind of a philosopher that can dwell on these things with dry eyes.

"I have been here for some six weeks. Mr. Holmes is attending to the interests of a client in Washington, but expects to join me early next month. In his last letter he expressed the hope that I would meet you here, and wished that you could await his arrival. Dear, good man! he always flatters himself that you will be as enthusiastic over our Charley as you were over sister Sue's children. And Charley is a dear little fellow, with just such a beautiful physical conformation as used to set you wild. O how thankful I am for his straight limbs and grace of motion! And yet I have seen such an illustration of the power of redeeming grace in Phoebe, that I will ever covet that as the best gift for my child.

"You will, of course, write to Mrs. Ross. Our friends, the Middletons's, are well, and send love. Mr. Holmes's address is Glen Rock Station, Marion County.

"Yours in the Church,

"MARY ARLINGTON HOLMES.

"PUMBEDITHA, August 23d, 185-."

Mr. Meagre not only wrote to Mrs. Ross, but found time to visit her in the course of a few weeks. The good woman was glad to see him. A warm grasp of hands and a smile, without a word spoken by either, was the first greeting. Oh, how lonely the stone cottage in the apple orchard seemed now! There stood the little low-wheeled chair and the soft pallet;—

even the "warm socks made out of list" were lying on the bed; but she whose patient sufferings had made them sacred things, was gone.

"I hope you are comforted, Mrs. Ross," said Mr. Meagre, at length breaking the silence.

"Comforted!" exclaimed she, "Oh, Mr. Meagre, hasn't God brought light out of darkness? 'Seems as if my heart went up to heaven's gate with the spirit of my child, and don't want to come back any more. And oh, sir, how my baby, as I always called her, loved *you* and spoke of you. If there is such a thing, she's smilin' down on you *now*."

Rev. Petit attempted some reply, but his feelings choked his utterance.

Presently Mrs. Ross put on a sun-bonnet, and quietly beckoned to her former pastor to follow her. She led him through a back gate around to the village church-yard, and conducted him to the fresh green grave that contained all that was mortal of dear, dear little Phoebe. And there, with the ashes of the sacrifice at his feet, thinking of Him, the incense of Whose merits made it acceptable to God, until he almost thought he saw the crowned child in glory; there, with bended knee and uplifted heart, re-consecrating himself to the service of his Lord and Master, praying for grace and strength that he might go back to his work a more devoted man, is perhaps the most fitting place to leave the "YOUNG PARSON."

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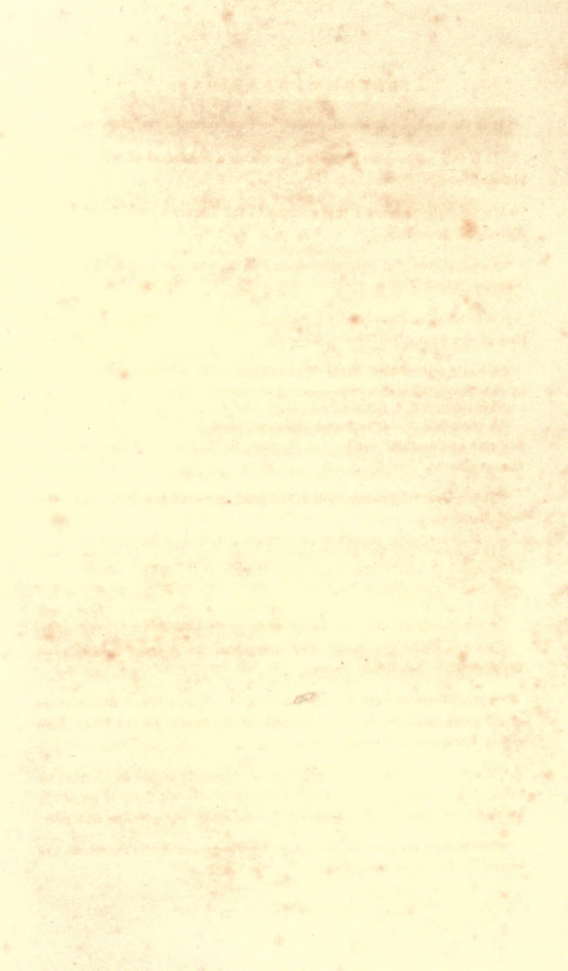
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